No. 7 October 1983

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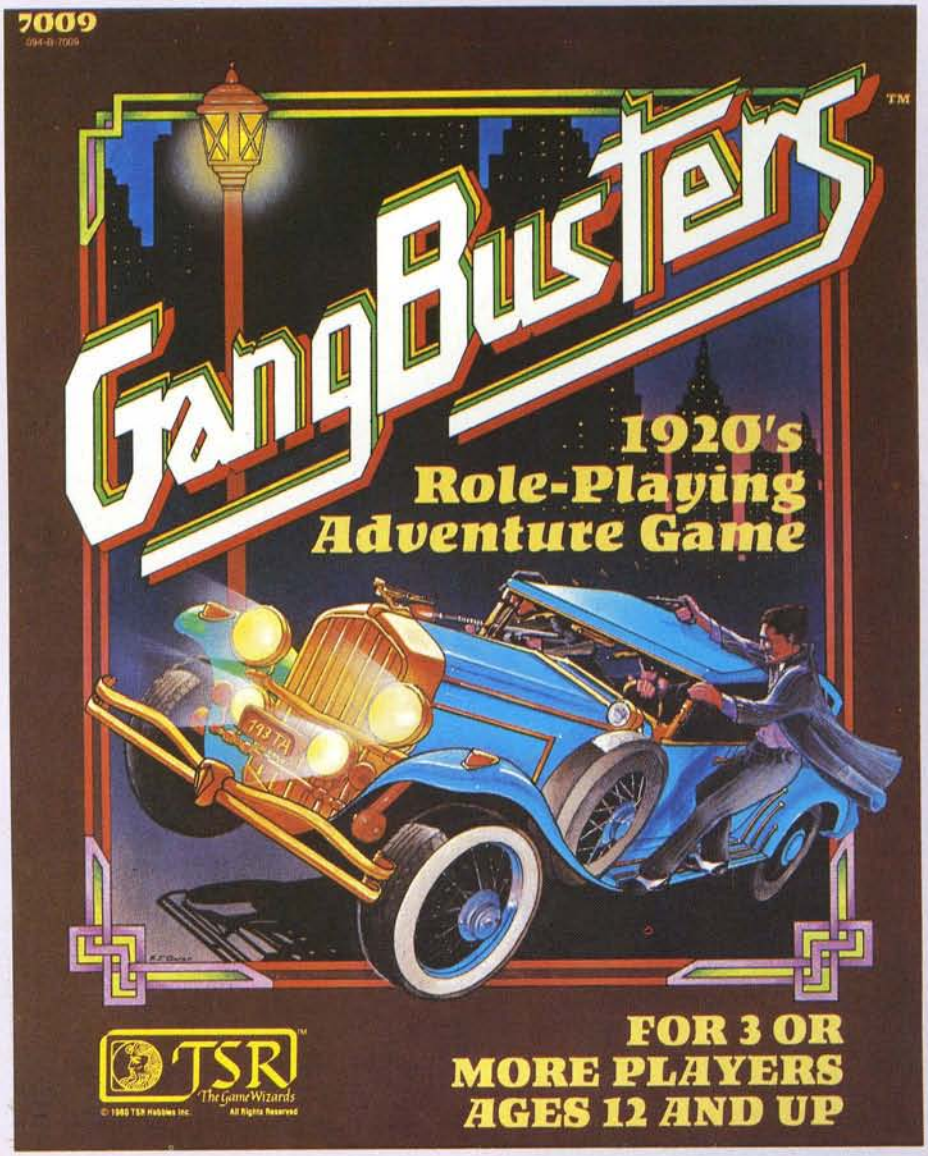

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No. 7 October 1983

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Editorial

The minions are getting restless. I have managed to palm off — sorry, delegate — the writing of the Editorials in the last two issues and I had hoped to keep this going for some time but they are revolting!

Issue 7 — gosh doesn't time fly — with the module, **Beauty Is But Skin Deep**, yet another splendid scenario from our Features Assistant and Pan Editor, Mike Brunton. Even more exciting is the new fiction from Graeme Davis, **The Gypsy**. Good things are in the pipeline for the future and, in particular, I look forward to the December, Christmas, issue.

One of our illustrious readers said that I might just as well write *Rhubarb, Rhubarb, Rhubarb...* instead of an Editorial because the few who bothered to read it would pay no attention anyway.

Such is the power of the pen that the ideas expressed by the author may have effects far beyond their original intention. Take rhubarb for example — a plant of many properties. it is said to be called after the river Rha, now Volga, in darkest Russia. It is a medicinal root stock, purgative and subsequently astringent, and what is more the leaves are poisonous, — and you can use a stew of it for cleaning saucepans! Perhaps I should take the idea of rhubarb for my Editorial and be purgative, astringent, poisonous and generally cleansing — it's a lovely thought!

Keith Thomson

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Uncanny Tales, by Jim Burns ..... cover

THE BEGINNERS' GUIDE

Valeria took a firm grasp on the edge of the ornate sarcophagus' lid and heaved with all her strength. Sweat broke out on her brow as her muscles bulged with the strain.

Nervously Vida fingered her holy symbol and waited for the lid to be opened. Whatever was in there was not going to be friendly and she wasn't taking any chances.

Seeing Valeria struggle, Glyn went to give her a hand. Ector stood ready at the other end of the stone coffin with two vials of holy water in his hands.

The slab moved with a grating noise. A charnel reek oozed forth. A decayed hand reached over the side, white bone showing through blackened flesh as the fingers clawed the air.

'Begone in the name of goodness and law' cried Vida. Her holy symbol thrust towards the horror climbing from the grave.

Sensing the power of the cleric, the undead creature stopped momentarily, but then continued.

Ector hurriedly threw his vial into its face. Steam hissed as the holy water burned like acid.

Glyn and Valeria both swung. In dismay Glyn saw his sword pass through its body without harm. Valeria's sword struck, bones shattered under the impact. Immune to normal weapons, wights could feel magic swords.

The wight turned towards its assailants. Its eyes seemed to burn into their souls as it reached towards them. With a cry Ector flung the second vial. It fell back against the sarcophagus and slid slowly to the floor.

Vida approached the smoking remains, now little more than a heap of rags and bones. 'It is destroyed, finally laid to rest.'

Ignoring the mess on the floor Glyn climbed over the edge....

Fantasy literature abounds with tales of brave warriors, devout clerics, mighty magic-users and cunning thieves, but these deeds are not restricted to the novel. Players of fantasy role-playing games can experience the thrill of exploration and combat as they participate in many different adventures.

The above took place during such a game. Sue is the referee or Dungeon Master who has created the setting for the adventure and runs the game according to the rules. The other players each take the role of a fictional character, like an actor taking on the part of a character in a play. Pat is playing a cleric, Roy a thief, Janet a fighter and Tony a magic user. The players are exploring the crypt of an ancient temple. They have just opened a heavy iron bound door....

Sue — 'The room is dusty, in the middle you see an intricately carved stone sarcophagus.'

Pat — 'I'll take out my Holy Symbol. There may be undead in here.'

THE ADVENTURES OF NIC NOVICE

NIC IS ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE HIS FIRST ADVENTURE
THE FIVE OF YOU MEET AT THE SINGING SCORPION A POPULAR AND LIVELY INN IN THE VILLAGE OF FANGSIN THE INN IS CROWDED WITH LABOURERS AND FARMERS MERRILY CHATTING TO EACH OTHER. AFTER BUYING DRINKS YOU SIT DOWN AT A NEARBY TABLE AND GET ACQUAINTED...
I'M A USER OF THE ARCANE ARTS CALLED SARAK!
I'M NORIA IRONARMS A STRONG FIGHTER .... LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE!!!
I'M BRUMHOLD .... A FIGHTER!
LEMMY, I'M A THIEF!!
JOLINDA IS THE NAME I'M A CLERIC OF LAW .... AND I'M PLEASED TO MEET YOU GOOD PEOPLE .....

TO ROLE PLAYING GAMES

Tony — 'Putting my lantern on the floor I take out two vials of holy water.'

Roy — 'I'll move up for a closer look.'

Sue — 'Roy, you notice a crack, 2" from the top running all the way round.'

Janet — 'I'll move the top slab.'

Sue knows from her room description that the slab is very heavy and can only be moved with the combined strength of two or more persons.

Sue — 'You soon realise that you won't be able to move it on your own.'

Roy — 'I'll push as well.'

Sue — 'The slab slides back with a grating sound and the smell of death and decay wafts up.'

Roy — 'Leaning over the top I'm looking in.'

Sue — 'It's dark in there but you see something moving, a black skeletal hand reaches towards you.'

Roy — 'I step back quickly and draw my sword.'

Sue — 'A black arm and body follows the hand.'

Pat — 'I'm calling on the power of my goddess to turn it.'

Tony — 'And I'm throwing one of my vials of holy water.'

Sue — 'As you two have been waiting to do so there's no need for you to roll initiative.'

Pat rolls two dice and Sue refers to a special table for clerics which shows their chances of turning undead. Unfortunately she fails the required roll. Tony now rolls and his score is checked on the combat table. He is more successful, scoring an easy hit.

Sue — 'Pat, you fail to turn it. Tony, you hit with the holy water. Roll a die to see how much damage you do.'

Tony rolls his dice and Sue takes the score off the wight's hit points.

Tony — 'I'm throwing the second one as well.'

Pat — 'I'll take a flask out of my backpack.'

Roy — 'I'll hit it with my sword.'

Janet — 'I will too.'

Before the players carry out their actions initiative throws are made. Tony throwing for the players gets a 5, Sue rolling for the wight throws a 2, giving the players the first attack.

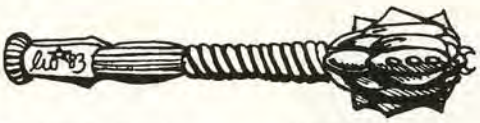
Roy swings and hits, but lacking a magic weapon he does no damage to the wight. Janet's sword is, however, magical, allowing her to hit it. She rolls and hits but does not destroy it. Tony throws his second vial and hits again.

Sue — 'Tony's damage destroys it.'

Roy — 'I'm climbing in to get its treasure....'

Jim Bambra

From next month in these pages we will be following ***Nic Novice*** *through a fantasy adventure, which begins below.*



PART SEVEN – GETTING ACQUAINTED

BY JIM BAMBRA AND PAUL RUIZ

HAVE YOU BEEN ON AN ADVENTURE BEFORE..?
NO. THAT'S WHY I'M KEEN TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE
I'VE HEARD THERE'S SOME ORCS RAIDING FARMS NEAR ABONE WE SHOULD SEEK THEM OUT AND PUT AN END TO IT !!!
COULD BE DANGEROUS!
NORVA AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF THE FIGHTING. YOU JUST DO YOUR BIT WHEN NECESSARY...
WE MUST STOP THE RAIDS. WE CANNOT ALLOW CHAOS TO SPREAD
LETS VOTE. ANYONE AGAINST GOING? NO. OKAY. LETS SET OUT TOMORROW!

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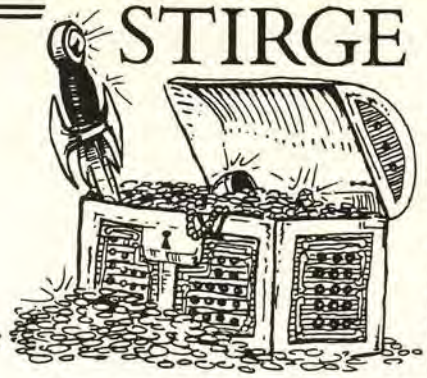
STIRGE CORNER



To have a bad plan is better than having no plan at all.... the model should be the commando raid: short, sweet and to the point.

A page for the not-so-experienced adventurer

by Roger Musson

What distinguishes the successful player in the D&D® game from the unsuccessful? One factor, as I suggested last month, is the importance of not taking unnecessary risks. There is another, very important consideration often overlooked by novices, and that is planning.

When you think about it, it is pretty much common sense that a party which wanders around aimlessly is going to do less well in the long run than a party which knows what it is doing because it has thought out its actions in advance. In chess, there is a maxim that to have a bad plan is better than having no plan at all, and the same is perhaps also true (though with less force) of role-playing.

I shall now advance my version of the elements of planning in the D&D game. One can distinguish three main types of activity, and the party should agree in advance which course of action to pursue. The three types are: *reconnaissance*, *attack* and *reconnaissance in force*.

Gather information

The object of a *reconnaissance* trip is simply to gather information about the dungeon and identify likely targets for future attacks. Accordingly, all action should be geared to that end, unless exceptional circumstances arise. The party will put careful effort into mapping an area of the dungeon, establishing routes in and out of the sector. Likely targets within the dungeon sector being investigated will be noted — does there seem to be treasure? How strongly guarded is it? Are there any means of getting it other than by a direct frontal assault? In the course of the expedition, combat should be avoided — concentrate on what you are there for. Run away from wandering monsters if at all possible; do not fight them unless you have to.

Magicians should choose spells of a defensive nature — ones that can be used to ward off unwelcome pursuers. Things like **protection from evil**, **darkness**, **web** and so on. These will be used to ward off encounters, so that with luck the party may eventually emerge without a single hit point lost. The other sort of spell to be taken on this sort of expedition is the **detect** spell, particularly **detect gold** and **detect magic**. These can be very useful when it comes to identifying the best targets in the area being explored.

The reconnaissance complete, the party can then pore over their new maps and decide how to pursue the next mission, which will be an *attack*. The model should be the commando raid: short, sweet and to the point. Pick one target; work out exactly how you intend to attack it, equip yourselves for the task, go straight in, hit it hard, and then get out as quickly as possible, with the treasure. Evidently, this is the time for magicians to stock up with spells such as **fireball** and **lightning bolt** — good offensive spells. Alternatively, other more specialised spells may be suggested by the detail of the attack plan. Has the treasure chamber two doors? If so, can a **phantasmal force** be sent in one door while the party sneaks in the other? If the party has a good choice of potions and scrolls available, this of course increases the possible options. Healing potions are especially useful in restoring wounded fighters so that they can escort the party safely out of the dungeon. Similarly, clerical healing spells are important here.

Quit while you're ahead

Once you have the treasure, get it out as quickly as you can. Even if the party is still fairly fresh, it is best to quit while you are ahead — get out what you have while you can, you never know what you might meet if you do not. You can always come back down later.

In certain circumstances, it becomes possible or necessary to combine the above two missions into one: the *reconnaissance in force*. The circumstances are these: it may be that the party is temporarily stronger than usual (a sudden influx of visiting players) but no previously identified targets are available. In this case it seems a shame to waste the extra strength on a pacific reconnaissance mission. One has to try and strike a balance between the reconnaissance and attack elements, dividing spells selected between both offensive and defensive categories. When a promising target is found, you should still give some thought to how you will attack it, though you have less time and leisure to make preparations. Always look for an alternative to wading in in a frontal attack. Frontal attacks cost characters.

Alternatively, in some adventure situations, a party may find it has to penetrate a stronghold that it can only get into once (by bribery, subterfuge or whatever). In this case, there is no alternative but to make one trip out of it. But be careful! It is much harder to do well on such an expedition.

Clear route to the exit

There is one further thing to add. One consideration must always take priority over any other in the plan: make sure you have a clear route to the exit. If your line of retreat becomes impassable for any reason (falling portcullises, etc) abort the mission and look for another exit at once. You may find you have to fight your way out, in which case it is far better to do so at full strength than when partly mauled from previous melees. If you find another way out relatively easily, then you can go back to the original plan. But never get into a fight if you are going to have problems escaping, unless it is absolutely forced on you. Fighting costs hit points almost invariably, and hit points are all that stand between you and a dead character.

Roger Musson

Stirge Corner *will provide more hints for players next month. If you find this feature useful, remember that back issues of IMAGINE™ magazine are available from TSR for £1.50.*

THE QUEST FOR THE PERFECT GAME

An introduction to the DRAGONQUEST™ game

by Robert Kern

One of the surest ways to make enemies among role-players is to take a stand in favour of one game over another. It usually leads to scowls, howls, and, unless the participants agree to disagree, several contusions and abrasions.

So, when I was asked to write an article introducing the DRAGONQUEST™ game to people perhaps more familiar with the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, I found myself in something of a dilemma. I started out in role-playing by getting into a campaign of the AD&D™ game, but after some time we became frustrated, we wanted more than it could offer. After examining several games, we decided on the DRAGONQUEST game. We began playtesting DQ supplements and adventures, and I gradually became involved in professional designing — I'm afraid I am not totally impartial!

But even with my professional connection to the game currently in limbo, I am still an advocate of the game. The offer of this article seemed the perfect soap box for me to proselytize.

My preferences are only that, mine. What I want of a role-playing game may not be what others want. So this article has taken on a different meaning. Both DQ and the D&D® game have their appeal, but to different groups. So take this article in the spirit in which it was meant, and make the final decision for yourself.

The D&D game, it is generally conceded, is a very simple system to master. Someone who has never role-played before can create a character, or run an NPC, with an existing group and get the hang of the game fairly quickly. That's how I started. They handed me a halfling thief and sent me off with a group of adventurers. I caught on quickly. In fact, that first night I introduced the idea of climbing the wall next to any door we were about to open. In this way anything that was behind the door (and our DM loved to have things pop out of freshly opened doors) would be off-guard, since there would be no target at floor level.

The major factor that made the D&D game easy for me and others is that the maths is already done for the player. To find the chance to hit, consult a matrix; to find the chance to climb a wall, consult a chart. The maths involved with modifiers is very rudimentary.

DQ, though, requires a background in role-playing. The amount of equations and combat formulae would frighten off beginners — or at the very least, be incredibly confusing.

But, I hear you cry, doesn't that mean that DQ is a slow-moving game requiring the constant use of a calculator or abacus. Happily, the answer is 'no'. The majority of equations are all worked out before the actual play session begins. During the adventure there is very little adding and subtracting. But still, you cry again, even though the maths is completed before playing, why use a system that requires so much preparation time and work?

The answer is simple. The DRAGONQUEST game is a much more flexible system than that of the D&D game. Most choices in the D&D game are widespread and irrevocable.

The choice of character classes is one the player is stuck with, once made, (yes, a character can change classes, but the cost is high — I've never met anyone who has actually done it, except while working towards becoming a bard). There were times when I wanted to run a character with the combined abilities of a ranger and an assassin or thief. Unfortunately, the rules were adamant, and the game was balanced so that such a character would severely upset the game system.

Consider for a moment, as I did, the abilities of some of the heroes of fantasy literature. They cannot exist using the rules of the D&D game. For example, in the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ tome, Elric goes well outside the rules. He is a (take a deep breath and try to get this out all at once) 10th level cleric, 5th level druid, 15th level fighter, 19th level magic user, 10th level illusionist, **and** a 10th level assassin. This isn't exactly a combination a player character might achieve....

In the terms of the DRAGONQUEST game, Elric would be a Rank 10 Alchemist, Rank 6 Beast Master, Rank 6 with a Hand and a Half sword. He would be at least Rank 4 in the skills of Assassin, Astrologer, Courtesan, Military Scientist, Navigator, Ranger and Thief. He would be an adept of the College of Lesser Summonings, with at least Rank 15 in all the General Knowledge Spells and Rituals, and at least Rank 10 with the Special Knowledge Spells and Rituals (I should mention that the College of Lesser Summonings is not in the basic game, but was scheduled to be published in the DQ supplement **Arcane Wisdom**).

I hope I didn't lose you with all the jargon in the previous paragraph. There are many areas where the DQ and D&D games differ, many in subtle ways. For the purposes of this article, I shall deal with four basic areas: Character Creation, Skills, Combat and Magic.

Character creation

The DQ system for creating characters gives much control to the player. In the D&D game, I always felt at the mercy of the dice rolls. If I had a certain type of character in mind, I hoped the die would give him to me. I once rolled up a character who wound up with a Strength of 4 — not very formidable, and he didn't last long. My first character for DQ, a slightly larcenous but loveable elf named Pimm, was designed in my image rather than according to the vagaries of the dice.

The biggest limitation on characters is the number of points the player gets to use in

creating it. Basically the player rolls 2d10. The result of this roll gives the player a number of Character Points between 82 and 98. The player divides these points among the six Primary Characteristics: Physical Strength, Manual Dexterity, Agility, Magical Aptitude, Endurance and Willpower. There are Secondary Characteristics such as Fatigue, Perception and Physical Beauty. These Secondary Characteristics are rolled for, assigned, or derived from the Primary ones. The GM may add his own Secondary Characteristics to suit his own campaign.

Pimm's characteristics were about average, ranging from 14 to 19. He was a Ranger and a Thief from the beginning. I created him using the First Edition of the DRAGONQUEST game rules, and I gave him the oriental nunchukus and shurikens as weapons. My GM made things difficult by not having anyone else in town who knew how to make, repair or use these weapons.

They were later deleted from the second edition of DQ since they did not strictly belong in the fantasy genre. By popular demand, though, plans were discussed to compile a supplement which would include one skill or a number of skills that enabled characters to be Martial Artists. This section would put these weapons and others into the game.

Characters in DQ have aspects, which means they are sensitive to the subtle cosmic forces in the universe. Players roll to see exactly what their character's aspect is. It can be related to any of the four seasons, the sun, the moon, life or death. Pimm was Autumnly Aspected which meant that he got bonuses at certain times during that season, especially at the equinox. And he suffered negative modifiers during the spring. Death Aspected characters can be fun in combat. The fall of one of the combatants bestows bonuses on that character's Base Chances....

I wanted Pimm to be an elf. However, this choice involves a percentile dice roll, designed to limit the numbers of the non-human races. There was a 30% chance that Pimm would turn out to be an elf as I chose — the chance being based on how powerful the race's innate abilities will make the character. To be a giant, for example, the player must make 06 or less on percentile dice. Like all games, DQ needs some restrictive rules to balance a campaign, although the GM can ignore these results and allow his players any race for their characters.

While there are the standard choices of Halfling, Dwarf, Elf, Human and Orc, DQ has two character classes not featured in the D&D game. Giants are what the name implies. A Shape-changer is a human with the ability to turn into a specific animal at will. They are not quite lycanthropes, since they retain their human wits, but they are nearly as invulnerable while in animal form.

Well, Pimm was an elf, which made it easy for him to advance in some skills, let him see in the dark, move more quietly, and gave him a chance to see invisible creatures. When I rolled for his birthright, he turned out to be the bastard son of poor trash.... not a very auspicious beginning. He started out with very little money, but with more experience points with which I raised his weapons skills. Once he had purchased some armour, he was ready to go.

For those interested, Pimm was a very busy character; saving women, flouting authority, getting in and out of scrapes by using his wits, rather than by fighting. He met an unfortunate end when, while climbing a tower, he slipped and fell 100' to his death. C'est la vie.

Skills

In the D&D game, only one decision is necessary. If you choose your character to be a thief, you know then everything he will ever be for the rest of his or her existence. If you ever hanker after a change, it will be easier to start a new character than to re-start the old one.

As your desires for your character change, DQ gives you the chance to make alterations. In the beginning, your character may have only one or two skills, but you can add as many as you like, and improve these skills as you see fit. This system does require some bookkeeping. There is also the constant decision-making process as to how you wish your character to progress; your thief is never locked into his profession.

There are sixteen skills outlined in the basic game, including Alchemist, Astrologer, Beast Master, Courtesan, Healer, Mechanician, Merchant, Military Scientist, Navigator, Ranger, Spy, Thief and Troubador — and the skills of Read and Write Language, and Speak Language add considerably to the list since each language would be ranked individually.

Each skill has a set of abilities. Each has an equation that uses Characteristics and the character's rank with that skill to determine the Base Chance for that ability. It may sound like a lot of work, but the computations are all done before play begins.

Combat

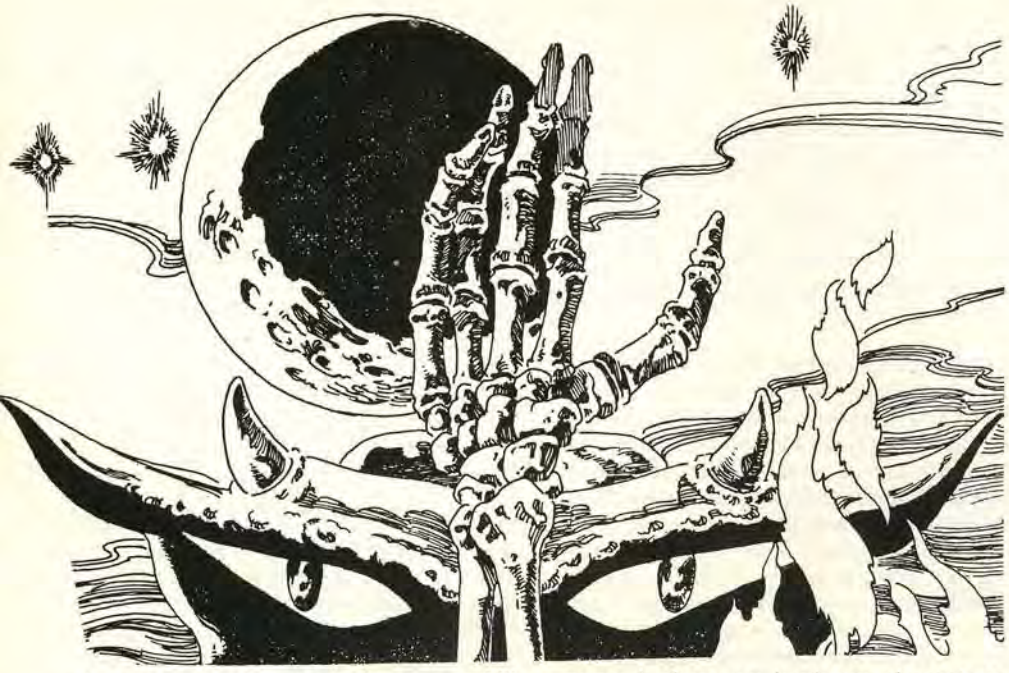
The First Edition of the DRAGONQUEST game contained a complicated combat system that required a lot of time and effort to get through. It required keeping track of Action Points. Every manoeuvre, attack, or spell casting used up a certain number of Action Points, and for a GM to run several adversaries was a staggering prospect.

When we re-did DQ and came out with the Second Edition, we threw out the entire combat system, and particularly the Action Points. Instead there is a Tactical Movement Rate which indicates how many hexes a character can move, and whether he can attack if he has moved.

As a player I stuck with DQ despite the complicated system (even the Second Edition remained tricky) because of the variety of manoeuvres one has available in combat. Characters can attempt to Knock Out an opponent, Disarm him, Evade (with the chance of a riposte), or a number of other choices.

Armour has nothing to do with determining the chance of one combatant hitting another. Instead it absorbs a certain number of damage points. Shields do not absorb damage, they make a character harder to hit, depending on how skilled he or she is with the shield being used. Weapons do damage based on the roll of a d10 plus that weapon's damage modifier. One of the neater aspects of DQ is the use of just ten-sided dice; there are no four-, six-, eight-, twelve- or twenty-sided dice. This could upset the Pythagorians in the audience, but it makes buying and reading dice much easier....

Hit Point chauvinists — those of you who prefer the concept that higher level



characters require more damage to kill may balk, but DQ does not have such a system. Instead damage is measured against a character's Fatigue, and when that runs out, against Endurance. This means that it takes about the same amount of damage to kill a neophyte character as it does to slay a veteran. The veteran is much harder to hit because he can Evade. This manoeuvre reduces an opponent's chance to hit and is based on the defender's skill.

And exceptionally low rolls produce better (or worse!) damage results. If the number rolled is 15% of the Base Chance, the damage done directly affects Endurance, with none being absorbed by armour or Fatigue. A roll which is less than 5% of the Base Chance means that a specific Grievous Injury may have been done to to the victim. These injuries can range from a cheek scar to having the heart punctured. Limbs can be lost.... it can be very bloody at times.

Karrak, my barbarian character, got into a fight with an orc. The orc got lucky and struck a Grievous Injury, cutting off Karrak's left hand. The amount of damage required me to make a further Willpower roll to recover from the stun. With his hand lost, Karrak took further damage each round from blood loss, and a Healer in the group wanted him to break off the fight so that he could staunch the bleeding. Karrak went on, cauterising the wound in a torch flame, and he succeeded in killing the orc.

What happened in the next round illustrates another of DQ's refinements. Karrak was hit for nine points of damage, but he only had three Fatigue Points left. Since the rule is that a character cannot lose Fatigue and Endurance points from the same blow, he lost just the three Fatigue points. This idea introduces a handy buffer zone, that means a character cannot die from just one shot, unless the blow was good enough to affect Endurance directly and severely. In the D&D game I often see beginner characters, who had the ill-fortune to roll low when going for hit points, slain just minutes into their careers.

Magic

Now we come to the most interesting part of the DRAGONQUEST game.

In the D&D game, a magic-user can use only so many spells as he can memorize. When one considers that spells go off, more or less automatically, it is a necessary balance. It still bothered me, though, since it severely limited any magic-user I ran on long treks. They were always having to run home to memorize spells from their books, unless they wanted to drag the weighty tome along and risk losing it or having it stolen. It was all very inconvenient.

DQ's magic system is much more satisfactory. The character is considered always to know the spell, and to be capable of an attempt to cast it. However, it costs Fatigue Points to cast spells, so the number of times a caster can perform is limited. Fatigue is recovered by rest and relaxation, so it takes time to cast lots of spells.

There is more. Each Spell has a Base Chance to perform properly. This chance is improved as the character rises in rank with that spell. If the spell fails the Fatigue points are used anyway. If the casting fails badly enough the spell may backfire. Spells may be cast either during combat rounds (within a five second period) or outside of combat at a leisure interval of one minute or more. In the combat attempt, any roll which exceeds the Base Chance by 30 or more indicates a backfire. In other circumstances the roll must exceed the Base Chance by 40 for a backfire to occur.

A backfire can do anything from using up more Fatigue Points to strike the caster with a debilitating disease. At one time an Adept who had the spell which was vital to the mission was struck with amnesia. Sometimes Fate plays a cruel trick on the valiant role-player.

Instead of Saving Throws, spells may be resisted. Active Resistance is a conscious effort to block out the effects of the spell; it reduces the caster's chance. Passive Resistance is a roll against the victim's Willpower to resist the effects after the spell is cast. The kind of resistance which can be used is outlined in the description of the spell.

There are thirteen 'colleges' of magic in the DRAGONQUEST game. They deal with the elements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air; the Heavens (Celestial Magics); general magics (Ensorcelments and Enchantments); Illusions; mental manipulations (Sorceries of the Mind); the dead (Necromantic Conjurations); Black Magics; demonology (Greater Summonings); and counterspells (Naming Incantations). Three more colleges, Lesser Summonings, Rune Magics and Shaping Magics were scheduled to be published in the **Arcane Wisdom** supplement.

A beginning Adept receives all the General Knowledge Spells and Rituals of that college. He must find another Adept (an NPC) to teach him the Special Knowledge Spells and Rituals. The number of spells and rituals a character may know depends upon the Magical Aptitude and Rank together with the spells the character possesses.

An Adept is not restricted in the kinds of weapons he may use, although carrying cold iron negates his ability to perform magic. Silvered, gilded and truesilvered weapons may be used by an Adept with very little or no effect on his casting abilities.

The Choice

The comparisons between the D&D and DRAGONQUEST games systems as I have shown them are such that I believe DQ to be more conducive to intense role-playing. However, the major difference that makes this so is not mechanical, but conceptual.

One of the most frustrating aspects of playing the D&D game was that I never knew what to expect. When I picked up a sword, it could just as easily transported me to the middle of Piccadilly as burst out into a chorus of 'You Light Up My Life'. Most magical items featured in the modules were items to be found, no character of mine could ever have had one made to order.

Also, my characters were constantly being hit with powers or effects I had never run across before. There was a constant influx of new monsters and magics — it felt like I was walking through a fun house rather than adventuring. My

character, presumably, had spent his early life in this world, and therefore should be as comfortable in it as I am in mine.

It is one of the tricks of fantasy literature that the reader may be confused, but the heroes never are. If I had wanted to be confounded and 'ooh' and 'aah' at the magic, I would read, or see one of the many special-effects filled movies of late. When I am playing a character, the satisfaction is in doing the job, rather than in being a spectator.

When we were revising the DRAGONQUEST game it was decided that nothing in the published adventures would violate the rules, nor would they include anything that could not be extrapolated from the rules. Any magical item would be invested with spells the players could find in the book, and traps would be of a recognisable nature if discovered.

When I read through **Beauty Is But Skin Deep**, the DQ mini-adventure that begins on page 21 of this issue, I was pleasantly surprised. The designer used an existing spell in a new and innovative way to create the mystery (I can't say too much more without giving away the plot. When you read or take part in the adventure you will understand what I mean).

We couldn't demand such adherence from a GM; he may put what he likes in his campaign. But the group I played with found the game more interesting and 'real' by sticking with this concept. It elevated the adventures above the usual hack and slay and forced us to use our wits. We role-played more and earned more experience points.

The earning of experience points is another area where the games differ. In the D&D game, the points are earned by fighting and killing or by grabbing up as much gold as possible. This makes players look for fights and forces characters into solving **all** problems with their weapons. The need for gold invariably convinces one player to have his character try to short-change the others.

In DQ there is a base experience award for each character just for playing the session. The award can be modified by the GM based on his evaluation of their role-playing performance and the success of the adventure. This system afforded me more freedom as a player. My less-than-brave elf, Pimm, would have suffered greatly in the D&D game since he would be reluctant to enter into combat. In DQ, though, his penchant for talking his way out of a situation earned him bonus experience points when he was successful at it. Of course, he would occasionally have to fight, but it was more stimulating for me as a player to have to think on my feet rather than rely on hacking my way through a wall of flesh.

I do not run all my characters in that way: Karrak would rather maim and settle differences by proving who is the stronger or more skilled in combat. But it is nice to know I have the freedom of choice without any innate penalties for not going the way of mauled flesh.

This concept has inspired some excellent role-playing. Players from campaigns where their characters were merely spectators have suddenly found themselves incredibly caught up in the game when they have a chance to think rather than fight.

A personal decision on the part of our group was that the Player Characters would be the prime movers in the fantasy universe they were in. There would be very few NPCs who would be better than them. This made them the Conans, Elrics and Gandalfs in the campaign. Of course, they also have the responsibility to succeed because no-one can come running to their rescue.

For those interested in pursuing the D&D game I should tell you there is good news and bad news.

The good news is that TSR now own the DRAGONQUEST game so that it no longer directly competes with the D&D game in the marketplace, and therefore can be given the full marketing and creative force that TSR can muster. The bad news is that there is very little support material currently out since TSR has been ironing out the problems of transfer of ownership. But there is further good news that the supplement **Arcane Wisdom** was ready to go when the takeover occurred. The further bad news is that TSR has no set date for its release.

If your interest has been piqued by this article and the adventure in the magazine, drop TSR a line and let them know there is a viable market for DQ. Tell them I sent you.

Robert Kern

*Robert Kern is a professional writer and designer. He co-designed **The Camp of Alla Akaber**, the introductory adventure included in the Second Edition of the DRAGONQUEST™ game. He also designed alien races and adventures for **Universe**, the science fiction role-playing game, due out this autumn, for Victory games. He enjoys his work and finds fantasy helpful when working as a political speechwriter.*

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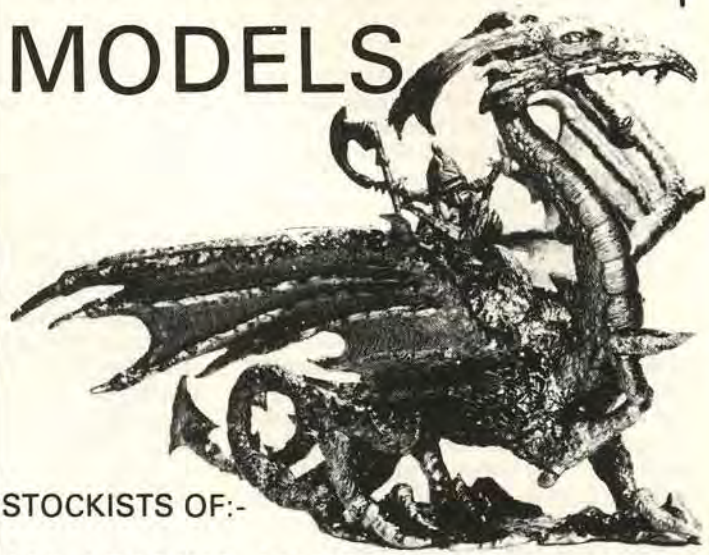

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The Philosopher's Stone

by Anne Hamill

A prize competition based on the AD&D™ and D&D® games

The Philosopher's Stone. Restless, changeful, it was sought by those who wished to step sideways out of time to where the Stone splayed out events of other times, other worlds. Like all oracles, the meaning of the events displayed was often obscure. But an adept, reading the story, looking deep into the picture overleaf might see more than mere scattered images in the facets of the Stone....

Can you solve the mysteries of the Philosopher's Stone?

The picture of the Stone overleaf is the second in a series of four pictures which will appear quarterly, showing events in the careers of a fighter, magic-user, cleric and thief. At the foot of this page you will find the story of the magic-user's search for the spell book of the mage who taught her, and the picture illustrates this.

However, not all is clearly stated. In order to enter this month's prize competition you must list the answers to as many of the following puzzles as you are able to decipher, how you decoded them and then complete the tie-breaker:

1. **The name of the mage.**
2. **The name of the magic-user.**
3. **The price set on the book.**
4. **The magic-user's alignment.**
5. **Any other messages you found.**
6. **Describe the mage's spell and its effect (in not more than 100 words).**

The winner will be the person who has solved all of the first four problems (1-4), and the greatest number of the other messages (5). In the event of a tie, the contestant who offers the most convincing explanation of the nature of the spell (6) will be awarded the prize. **The decision of the publisher will be final.**

All entries should reach IMAGINE™ magazine by **November 1st 1983**. The results will be published in the January issue of the magazine, # 10. Winners will be notified by post.

The winner will receive a voucher redeemable through TSR UK Ltd for goods to the value of £40. There will be three runners-up prizes of £10 each. These vouchers can be exchanged for any products in the TSR or SPI™ range.

In addition to the prizes for each of the four parts of the competition, the fighter, the magic-user, the cleric and the thief, the person who has solved most clues over all four pictures will receive an original picture by Anne Hamill based on this competition.

The Magic-user

Since early that morning when she had struck camp and begun to seek an entrance in the carvings on the cliff wall, it had become obvious that by no means all the niches and tunnels penetrating the walls led any deeper than a few hundred metres into the solid rock. On to the next one, the sun beating down on her back, in the hope that this one would lead to the burying place which had to be here, somewhere....

'Stranger fear — I see what you look for
None come here but they come prepared for this
Desire of power makes you seek this book
Nine spells of ancient years plus one makes ten
The one distilled from knowledge through the years
This book will give you strength you dream not of
But you must pay my price before 'tis thine
So give me my demand, or give thy life.'

She stared at the inscription above the passageway, and felt an uncharacteristic sensation of fear shiver down her spine. Pompous ass, she muttered brusquely and sniffed. Once they get a bit of knowledge they always have to have the last word. This one was apparently still gloating in his grave. But it was good to know that it was true, the story she'd heard, that there was a spell, a unique spell, against which there could be no automatic defence without equal research. A new spell would give its wielder such power over others.... Her lips curved upwards in an acquisitive triangular smile. Whatever the price, it was worth it. And the omens had been good....

'It's a Northern method,' the woman had said. The faded carpets above her head swung jewel-like coloured shadows sparking across the cards she held. 'I, er, bought these from a traveller. The action of your hands in sorting them allows the cards to reveal your destiny – see,' and she placed the cards then turned them. 'Ah – now this card, the second – the magician – that's an obvious one, of course – it represents the mage you seek – although I suppose it could be, er, yourself – and this one, that represents success, while the moon, that's mysterious matters, intuition, magic – so that's good, success in mysterious matters to do with the one you seek.'

'And this one? You didn't mention the skeleton.'

'Oh, that's er – that's danger, you'll have to face danger to find success.' The woman was perspiring, noticeably.

She smiled, reminiscently. Stupid old woman. As if she hadn't known Death, the thirteenth card, when she'd seen it. But the spread had, after all, told her something. She thought of the smooth white cards that lay now in her bag and shook her head. At least it had given her a name. At least she now knew who it was whose spell she sought.

It took three endless days to penetrate to the inner chamber. Days of trials which had leached her of magic and combat that had bled her of strength. Her legs felt drained of blood as she edged past grotesque carvings of ghosts and deities into the cylindrical shaft of the room. Her flare lit only the centre of the room, leaving the walls in shadow. Above her, her light faded into darkness. She brought it closer to the wall nearest her. In the centre a peg ladder ascended out of sight. It was flanked by gilded paintings in the customary manner of the houses of the dead, showing servants bearing gifts. She felt a quiver of excitement, near now, she could feel that she was very near to the centre of power that had been drawing her like a magnet. Somewhere above her lay the Book of Spells, up the ladder. If only she didn't feel so lethargic....

It came to her belatedly that there was danger here. With tired fingers she fumbled for her pots and began to make ritual markings on her body in the white clay. The powders – her hands spilled the coloured sands unevenly in an intricate pattern about her. As the outer circle closed, two things happened. She felt suddenly more alert, her body responding swiftly once more to her commands; and just on the fringes of the light, movement. It seemed almost as if the carved figures that had lain dormant in the wall were shivering, pulling themselves free of the rock with a sucking ease that made it seem as soft as mud. With rapid movements she poured sand into symbols to surround her. As the last character was finished, a spark leapt and ignited a ring of flame about her, and she reached to her shoulder sling for the flute. Her eyes slid to a parchment and she intoned the words on it, conjuring with fierce concentration the image of HIM WHO PROTECTS. Air entered her lungs with a keening sound, and she began, conserving her breath, to blow.

TAROT
The cards of the Tarot that all will or danger of kind and to the seeker. Often may be ill-fitting as well as good. Names of people & signs present in the seeker. Note particularly the Omissions, in order those with the Aleane of the Master of Arts who
ROT
ng the cards, left hand the most splay selection made seeker after in the following ner The High ls arrange in the iamond overlapping taking each d in turn clockwise off the message answers the query the seeker. ways be aware that most important truths to be the most obscure.
MAGICIAN
DEATH
SUN
HER ENEMY TO DISASTER.
GANAYEEL GANHEEL GANHEEL!
TUNGUNI, RASHTA!

GEMINI · THE TWINS · CANCER · THE CRAB · LEO · THE LION
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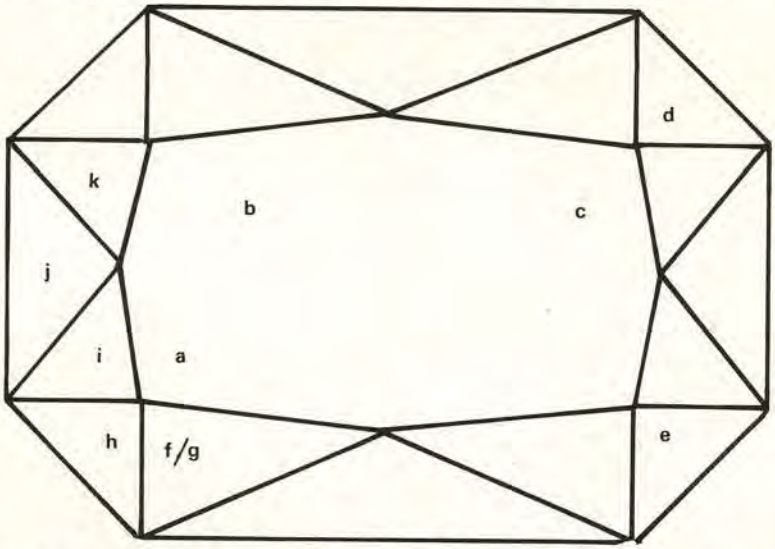
HANNIBAL '83

COMPETITION RESULTS

The Philosopher's Stone: The Fighter

And now, the part you've all been waiting for, the results of the first instalment of the competition.

We received an amazing 150-odd entries, of which 50% had the four main answers correct. We clearly made it far too easy! Around a quarter of those entrants also solved all of the other puzzles, which made the tie-breaker crucial. After long deliberations and discussion we unanimously chose the explanation of the role of the woman offered by **Patrick Brain** of Street in Somerset, who wins a voucher for £40-worth of TSR products, and as runners-up, each winning a £10 voucher: **Martin Abrahams** of Wallington, Surrey **J R Garnett** of Harrow in Middlesex, and **C A Nelson**, also of Harrow in Middlesex. Well done to these four, and especially to all the others who reached the tie-break stage — better luck next time! And don't forget you still stand a chance of winning the overall prize for solving the most puzzles in all four parts of the competition.



And now, the winning answers.

1. The name of the sword is **HARDSHIP**, which the fighter worked out by reading the runic inscription on the sword, and from a clue in the text, where the fighter's teacher told him 'the man who'd wield that sword must not flinch from hardship'.

2. The message on the obverse of the sword reads, '**he who passes through these knows my nature and my Name**' — the capital giving the clue to the means by which the name is revealed in the main message: '**through Hunger Appetite; against Resistance Determination; in Suffering Humility; from Ignorance Perception:**'.

3. The name of the fighter is **Tengakhan**; this is coded in morse on his armour: '**My name is Tengakhan now go away**'.

4. The alignment of the fighter is **Lawful Neutral**, which is revealed in the text — the first letter of each of the first 13 lines — and by the runic LN on his helmet.

5. The other messages to be found were as follows:

a. Why don't you give up on the fighter's belt

b. Kilroy was here on his right arm

c. What a nice person you are. Maybe we should give you a clue. On the other hand, maybe not on the pillar

d. I am a mysterious dragon. Yoohoo, I can see you on the dragon's banner

e. BEGONE FOOL! HENCE! on the fighter's helmet

f. It is possible to solve this puzzle but not this way and...

g. It's not as easy as you thought it was going to be, is it? on the beads around the skull

h. Look mate, don't press your luck. Would we make it that easy? Who do you think we are, Oxfam? on the medallion

i. LEAVE NOW from the initial letters of the book titles

j. Puzzles can be irritating on the horse

k. Here's looking at you kid on the snake.

Several people also noticed that the fighter had six fingers — or rather, five fingers and one thumb — on his right hand. This was unintentional and not a clue!

For the tie-breaker, we were looking for an interpretation that did not invent too much, but rather **analysed** the woman's role, accounting for her behaviour in the fighter's dreams and her non-appearance in the actual confrontation with the sword. Patrick's winning explanation ran as follows:

The unknown woman represents the *Anima*, the centre of all feminine forces — emotional, intuitive, compassionate — within a man. Dreams often compensate for lopsided conscious attitudes. Therefore the *Anima* appears when a man neglects his femininity, becoming utterly masculine, cruel, defiant, and ruthless.

Hardship has caused the fighter to deny his feminine nature. Thus, in his dreams, he felt he must kill the woman. But now, having completed his quest, he need no longer deny his compassion, etc, but rather embrace it, to become whole again. Hence the *Anima* no longer appears separate from him, but is part of him again.

Of those entrants who did not even get the main puzzles, the most common mistake was over the alignment. Most people seemed to be working it out for themselves rather than looking at the text or the picture. In fact, very few of those who **did** answer this question correctly used the textual clue.

The most entertaining wrong answers from our point of view, as we ploughed through all the entries, came from the people who did not discover the fighter's name. Apart from the inevitable 'Hero' and 'Kilroy', there were many bewildering variants — Bevan, Ben Gaul, Bohemian Sharky, Svjic, Raiko.... (Keep it up! It's so **dull** when everyone gets it right!).

Now, if you have not already done so, why not turn back to the preceding three pages and start workng on Part Two of the competition: **The Magic-user**. It costs only the price of a stamp to enter, and (unless you are exceptionally good at this sort of thing) should provide you with hours of entertainment.

ILLUMINATIONS

Transatlantic Tales

The biggest news of late is, of course, the release of the new, revised edition of the Basic D&D® game, which is already in the shops, and is reviewed on page 42 of this magazine.

Yet this is not all. Also reviewed in this issue is the revision of the GAMMA WORLD™ game, a greatly improved version of this game of the future. And an alternative future is revealed in the long-awaited and very impressive STAR FRONTIERS™ KNIGHTHAWKS™game. Spaceships and intergalactic conflict — a tremendous package for £8.95.

Lastly in this current crop of arrivals: X5 - **The Temple of Death**, M2 - **Maze of the Riddling Minotaur** and GB3 - **Death on the Docks** — which has been sitting on the docks for ages, it seems.

Beyond, we enter a time of myths and mysteries. The WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ gazetteer revised edition, the AD&D™ Metal Miniatures, O1 - **Gem and the Staff** and L2 - **Assassin's Knot** are awaited, as are **Monster Manual II** and two SPI™ games, **Gleam of Bayonets** and **Battle Over Britain**.

Later still are scheduled GW3 - **The Cleansing War of Garik Blackhand**, GW4 - **Mind Masters**, GB4 - **The Vanishing Investigator**, U3 - **The Final Enemy** and B5 - **Horror on the Hill**. And if all that happens as we predict, we will be very surprised.

Monumental Endeavour

A New York book dealer, **John Bambach**, is in the middle of producing an index of all magazines, professional and amateur, that are devoted to role-playing games. His training in the book trade made him anxious to establish some sort of order to his 'zine collection, so he made an index covering such things as weapons, armour, combat, character classes, magic, treasure, scenarios, etc. It then occurred to him that such a system would be useful to fellow gamers. Consequently he is now expanding it to cover every issue of every 'zine that he knows about. The finished article will then be published. I wish him well in his monumental endeavour. Just imagine the convenience of one single index to cover every issue of every pro and fanzine. J Bambach, you are a hero sir. I hope you prosper.

Jeux de Role

I have recently been sent copies of two French gaming magazines. **Casus Belli** has a glossy cover, 48 pages and numerous articles of interest to role-players. There is a Bushido review; a Japanese scenario which uses a mixture of Bushido and the AD&D game (*Donjons et Dragons*), a Space Opera review and an article on 'Bzzionikhs' which translates roughly as Psionics. The second magazine, **Runes**, is not so glossy but concentrates entirely on *des jeux de role*. There are reviews of Traveller, Space Opera, STAR FRONTIERS game and Runequest, plus new rules and scenario suggestions. There is a new characteristic — *Le Sens de l'Humeur*. If only I could read French I'd know what that meant. As a testimony to their Gallic good taste, they also include a brief review of IMAGINE magazine. They describe it as *'...bien présenté et relativement intéressant, surtout pour les débutants (qui comprennent l'anglais!)'*. This seems like a good excuse for a staff 'fact finding' weekend in Paris....

*IMAGINE™ magazine thanks **Doug Cowie** for his assistance with these items.*

Scenario News

There are a couple of new scenarios for SF fans to look out for. **The Vanished** is FASA's first supplement for their Star Trek game. Seems like the entire crew of Deepspace Research Station 39 has disappeared. If we can just prise that blonde away from Captain Kirk, we'll go and investigate. From FGU comes **Agents of the Rebellion**. This is a Space Opera scenario pack set in the CSA sector of the Korrelian Imperium. The players find themselves locked into the struggle of the Underground Alliance. There are several adventures which can be played independently or as a campaign. The goal of the campaign is to further the cause of the Alliance rebels by a subtle use of the espionage skills of the players. Based on the normal level of subtlety displayed by most players ('I'm loading with APDS'), one trembles with anxiety for the success of the revolution.

Flagship Launch

News has reached us of a new professional magazine, **Flagship**, to be devoted to postal gaming, the launch date of which is set at the end of this month. A quarterly, 36-page publication, it aims to cover the full range of

postal games. The price will probably be £1.50 per issue initially, though subscriptions will be cheaper. For more details, contact Nicky Palmer at 7 Delahay House, 15 Chelsea Embankment, London SW3 4LA.

From Victory With Love

More details are available of the forthcoming **James Bond 007** RPG from Victory Games. There will be a boxed set comprising the Basic Game book, character records and dice. This is known as the Basic Kit in the States but, curiously, the UK importers are calling it the De Luxe Kit. It will be £11.95. The Basic book will also be available as a separate item at £7.95. Also at £7.95 is the **Q Manual** which is a compendium of details of the weapons, vehicles and master spy gimmicks available to the would-be 007s. A Game Master pack (what are female refs supposed to use?) including referee's screen; plastic based, die-cut card figures and vehicles; an 11" x 17" gridded sheet for playing encounters on; and a pad of character sheets. GM Pack will be £6.95. Finally, there will be two complete adventures, **Octopussy** and **Goldfinger**, at £5.95 each. This all adds up to quite a hefty initial release in anyone's language. Victory Games think they're onto a winner, but of course it all depends on the quality of the game. Tie-ins with TV programmes of movies are not enough on their own, as the sad fates of the RPG of *Dallas* and the board game of *Escape from New York* show all too clearly.

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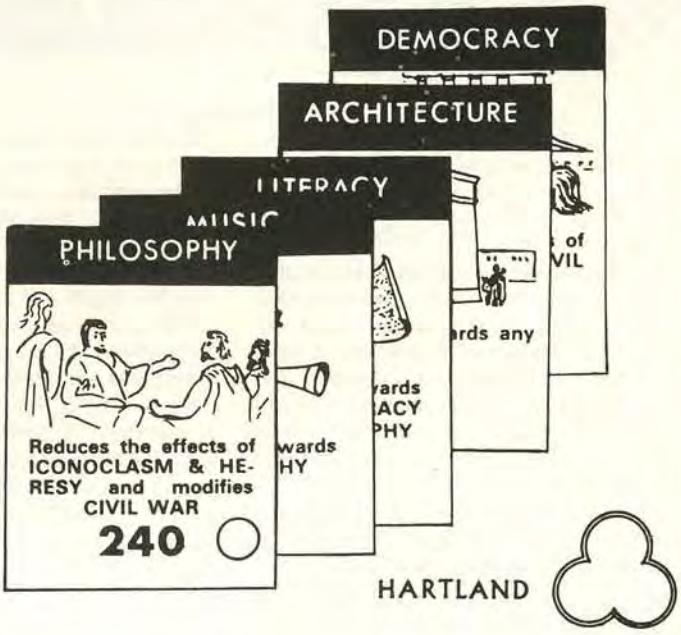

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THE GYPSY

by Graeme Davis

The Gypsy looked up as I came through the open doorway into his dark, incense-filled room. It had been a long time since we had last spoken, longer still since the placing of his enchantment, to which I owed my life more times than I could comfortably call to mind.

A hundred years. It still disturbed me to think of it. For nearly twice a natural lifetime, the magic which he had woven that day had preserved me against the attack of swords, of sickness, even of time itself. Forty years since, and more, I had watched my beloved Valsana grow old and die, unable to gain for her the same protection that kept me helplessly watching. The Gypsy had said that it was impossible, and had blinded me with a lot of double-talk about the nature of his magics and the nature of the subject and their importance for the success of any enchantment. At least, that is what I think he spoke of — all I knew was that it boiled down to the answer no. We had quarrelled and I had not seen him since.

Even then, the blight had begun. I noticed it at first in small things. Sometimes I would absently pick up a cup which I had already drained, to find it full, and then it would somehow become empty when I remembered drinking. There were other things, difficult to explain, but somehow wrong. Small things. But they had worried me. As I worried, the blight grew worse. Eventually people seemed to *overlook* me at times — occasionally at first, but more and more as the years went by. I had spoken to the Gypsy about it, but as usual he had filled me with words that I did not understand, saying that it was in the nature of the enchantment, and that nothing could be done about it. For my part, I had supposed that since his charm was against nature, it strained the natural laws around me, so that at times they would break.

At last the blight had spread even to Valsana. Even she began to ignore me at times, and for the last ten years of her life she had never given any acknowledgement of my existence. That was when the Gypsy and I had quarrelled. It almost drove me mad. Still the blight spread, in new and more insidious ways, gnawing at the edges of my sanity. For the last fifty years no living thing had acknowledged me. Nature had rejected me for my transgression. I had borne it for as long as I could, reminding myself that this was the price of the Gypsy's charm, but now the price had become too high even for an eternity of life — if life it may be called, such an existence.

And so I had come back to the Gypsy. The bitterness of our quarrel over Valsana had kept me away for many years, but I had slowly come to realise that he would have woven the charm I desired upon her had he been able, for he had loved her almost as much as I — indeed, we had once been rivals for her attention, and it had come perilously close to destroying our friendship. Sometimes, in the depths of despair, I had wondered whether even the Gypsy would acknowledge me; perhaps the blight had spread too far, and I would be left raving impotently to myself. But finally I had come. I was desperate. I was lonely.

The Gypsy — I never did know his name, for all that we had been friends and companions for longer than I cared to think of — smiled his veiled, half-mocking smile, and waved me to a chair which faced him across his parchment-littered desk. He poured two goblets of wine from the jewelled decanter at his elbow, passing one to me. We drank for a moment in silence, and I regarded him.

Time had been kind to the Gypsy. Or more probably magic had been kind on time's behalf. He appeared no older now than when we had first met; his face and hair were untouched by age, although the dark, polished stones of his eyes gave some indication of the years that had passed over him, but then they had always been so. His was a fey nature. I wondered briefly whether he was truly so ageless, or whether he had merely drawn on his appearance like a carnival mask for the eyes of those around him. Then he spoke.

'It has been long,' he said, regarding the dark surface of his wine as if it held the secrets of life and death.

'That it has,' I agreed, 'Too long.' There was a pause, which became uncomfortable. I did not speak, mainly because I felt that he was trying to force me to do so. He had always seemed to look on the human race as a plaything for his obscure humour. When he eventually broke the silence, it was for all the world as though he had merely been lost in recollection.

'They were good days,' he said. I nodded. I could tell from his deliberately roundabout manner that he had somehow sensed my desperation, and that he was toying with me. It was ever his way.

'Good days,' he repeated at length, 'All but the bad ones, and those we have long since forgotten.' He looked up at me with that unreadable but faintly unsettling expression that he used in place of a smile. We drank a silent toast to the old days, good and bad.

'One, though,' he said after a while, 'You would have undone.'

I paused. He had done it again. Whether his powers allowed him to read my mind I did not know, but he did have the most unnerving habit of bringing out a person's innermost thoughts as casual pieces of conversation. On the other hand, I reminded myself, why else was it that I had visited him after so long. He was probably just trying to set me off balance. I remained silent, that seeming the best way to appear unperturbed.

'I warned you that the price would be high,' he said.

'As was the value,' I replied, almost trying to convince myself that this was so.

'And still you regret,' he said, refilling his goblet. 'I remember the first time, after the placing of the charm,' — the faintest trace of an ironic smile crossed his face —'The disappointment on your face when that sword did not wound you. Without the risk, the game was empty.'

'There were greater games,' I reminded him, 'That would otherwise have been impossible.'

'Ah, yes,' he said, almost with a chuckle, 'As you tried to recapture the thrill of the gambler. Chasing demons instead of brigands, always searching for something strong enough to break the charm. There were times when I wondered if you would even brook at the annihilation of the gods. Strange it is, that once immune to death, you should seek it with such passion. Stranger still, the time you nearly found it....'

I must have stiffened slightly, for he stopped in his reminiscences. That was one time I had not wished to remember. When I thought I had recaptured the old thrill of battle, in that obscene temple, the exultation had turned to cold fear in my stomach. Invulnerability had made me a coward.

'It was not long after, as I recall, that you retired,' the Gypsy went on.

'Loaded dice become tedious when the stake loses its value,' I conceded, uncomfortable that he should find me so easy to read. 'But I suppose it was no more than I should have expected.'

'And you, my poor young friend, played always for the love of the game, but only realised once the game was spoiled.' He smiled the indulgent, faintly irritating smile of one watching a small child realise its error.

'And can the game be righted?' I asked, trying desperately to appear unconcerned. His voice told me that I had failed.

'So, the price is too high, then?' he almost purred. 'I had warned you from the start.' I nodded; he had indeed warned me, but I had thought only of the prize of immortality. Any price would have been a bargain. Or so I had thought.

'After so long with Death grinning over your shoulder, you mourn the loss of his company?' the Gypsy continued, almost as if he were trying to provoke me. 'Will you surrender immortality because of mere tedium, or will you be back for more enchantments as soon as you begin to grow old?'

'You warned me of the price,' I countered, 'But not of its nature. Eternity is of little use to a madman.'

For the briefest instant I saw a chink in the catlike mask of the Gypsy's composure. He leaned forward slightly.

'Tell me,' he said, almost earnestly, 'You have been experiencing — so to speak — things out of the ordinary? The lesser effects of the charm are little known; it has not been cast for several centuries.'

He was clearly interested. I was almost tempted to repay him in his own coin for the times he had toyed with me when I had needed his help or advice. The way he had reacted, as if I were no more than the result of an interesting experiment, galled me; but I needed his help now, and I could not afford to offend him.

I explained as best I could about the manifestations of the blight, and tentatively mentioned my theory that the charm was sundering the laws of nature around me. The Gypsy listened, leaning back in his chair with his long fingers steepled and his eyes staring sightlessly into the wisps of blue-grey smoke which rose from his incense-burner.

Occasionally he would stop me, and question me more closely about some particular event or phenomenon; he seemed to be most concerned with what I had been thinking immediately beforehand or what I had expected to happen, but it was difficult to divine his purpose from his questioning. I answered him as well as I was able, and he would nod to himself in an abstracted manner before bidding me continue.

When I had finished, he sat for a short time in contemplation. Although he offered me no explanations, something in his manner told me that he understood the nature of the blight when at last his attention returned to me. In a way, I had expected no explanations; he had a way of explaining magic which denied all understanding, and the words would have been wasted.

'I warned you that the price would be high,' he repeated, 'But I must warn you that the price of the unbinding will be higher still. It is always easier to break than to mend. I do have the ability to revoke the charm, but you must consider carefully before you ask me to use it.'

'If it is worse than watching your own sanity trickle away like sand through an hourglass, it must be dire indeed,' I said. After his reaction to my mention of the blight, I more than half-doubted that he had known the price of his charm. That

'Strange it is, that once immune to death, you should seek it with such passion.'

being so, it worried me that he might not be aware of the full consequences of its unbinding. Having regretted one decision for more than a century, I was loath to pitch myself blindly into another.

'The price is definite,' he assured me, 'And I am fully aware of the effects.' Clearly he had sensed my doubts. 'But to explain them to you would almost certainly bring the unbinding upon you of itself. And that must be your decision.' His black eyes bored into the depths of my soul, and I could see that he wanted me to believe in his sincerity. I had long given up trying to establish whether this sincerity was genuine — you could never tell with the Gypsy.

In any case, I knew that he would tell me no more; I would have to decide on my own. I thought for a long time — it was an agonising choice to make, between the madness which threatened to engulf me and some unknown torment which he had assured me would be worse. But I knew that I could not go on as I was. At length I made my decision.

'What this terrible price might be, that it is worse than encroaching madness, I know not. I think that I must take the risk rather than add an eternity of recrimination to the slow insanity which already confronts me. You are the only person to speak to me for these many years, and the solitude is becoming more than I can bear. If the price of the unbinding be my very death, so be it; I am practically dead already.'

The Gypsy looked at me sharply. His gaze was uncomfortable, but I held it. At length he spoke, apparently satisfied of my resolve.

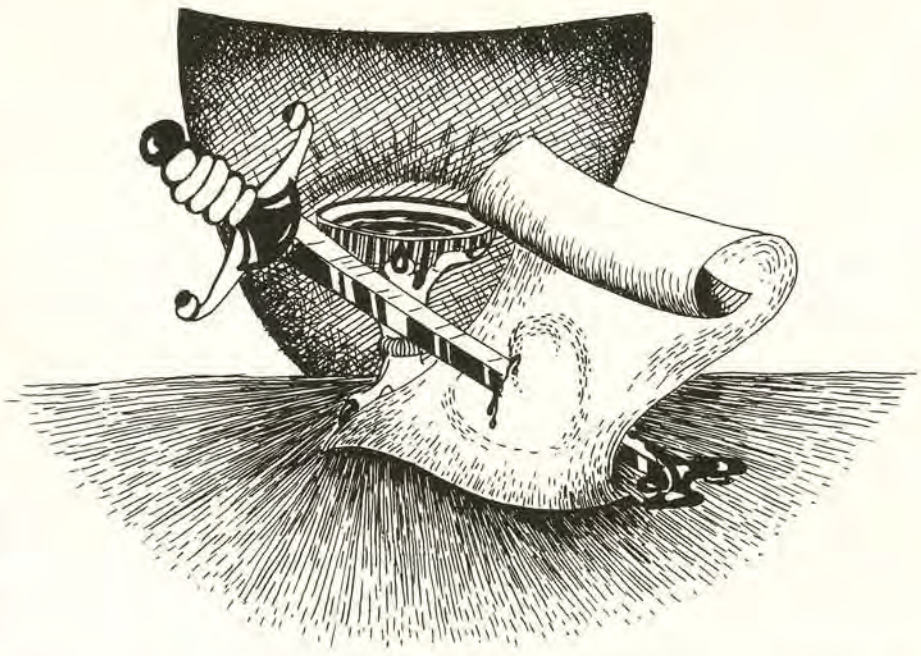
'Do you remember the words of my charm?' he asked.

'Their gist only. That no weapon or foe might harm me, that their blows should pass through my body as if it were mist. I sometimes wonder if you did not turn me to mist, and I somehow failed to notice.' My weak attempt at a jest fell dead on the velvet draperies.

'Perhaps the worst,' I continued, 'was that Valsana came to ignore me like all the others. Would that you could have done something for her, so that at least we could have been together.'

'And visit on her the same blight of which you now complain?' responded the Gypsy, his words as smooth as a riposte in tierce. I could not answer.

'But no matter,' he went on, 'That is in the past, and no amount of longing may change it. Your mention of Valsana reminds me that it was shortly after your.... happy union that I placed the charm. A powerful charm. Immortality and invulnerability, all men's desire; a protection to rival the sanctity of the gods themselves. The price, as you have discovered....'



'But what of the unbinding?' I demanded, momentarily losing control of my impatience. But I knew there was no point in trying to hurry him; he would tell me, or not, as he wished, and in his own time.

'Patience,' he said. 'You will understand in good time. At the time of which I speak, we had lately been rivals, as I remember. But your shoulders were the broader. You brought back gold and gems, I merely dusty old parchments. The result of our rivalry was a foregone conclusion, but I was angry. Love makes fools even of the wisest.'

I was beginning to understand. I had not realised the extent of his bitterness.

'So you wove the blight into your enchantment, to make me an outcast, ignored even by those I loved?' When I thought of what a jealous magician might do to those who had offended him, my blood turned to ice. His vengeance upon me had been light. But he shook his head, almost sadly.

'No,' he said, 'that was merely an inevitable side-effect. The charm I worked was on your mind rather than on your body.' I began to speak, but he held up a hand to stop me.

'Your experiences were real enough, never fear,' he continued, 'but they proceed from the nature of the illusion. Yes, my handsome, muscular friend, the charm I placed upon you was illusion — a powerful illusion, but an illusion none the less. You believed yourself invulnerable, just as you believed yourself to speak with others and live as men live. But that first sword killed you, and your body is now dust in some nameless crypt. And yet you thought yourself alive, so that your deluded spirit saw itself eating, walking, and talking with others, just as it expected to see these things. But from time to time, when you did not know what to expect, the illusion could provide you with nothing. And so nothing happened. Or sometimes the background noise of your own mind, your random subconscious thoughts, were taken as the basis for the reality which the charm gave you. That is the root of your affliction, and from there it has spread to your present unhappy condition, as uncertainties and anomalies have given rise to more uncertainties, just as ripples on a pond spread and multiply and interfere with each other.

'So now you know why I could not name the price of the unbinding without bringing the unbinding upon you; for the unbinding is the oblivion of death — the long-due quietus of your deluded soul, which only I am able to see through the exercise of my modest skills.'

I was not sure how much of this explanation I understood, but his talk of my long-distant death irritated me. I was becoming tired of his games.

'Can a formless spirit drink wine?' I demanded, draining my goblet and holding it before his eyes.

'Look again,' he said quietly. My hand was empty; the goblet stood untouched on the desk where he had left it.

He was tricking me again, I thought, toying with me when I sat before him helpless and desperate. I became angry, moved to strike him for his mockery, but even in that instant, his words reformed themselves in my mind, as if of their own volition, and they hung there, turning and glittering like torchlit sword blades caught in the frozen instant of striking. Illusion.... reality.... death.... spirit.... they forced themselves in upon my mind.

The last thing I saw was the unholy, malevolent *triumph* on his face. Then darkness took me.

Graeme Davis

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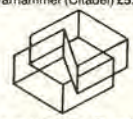

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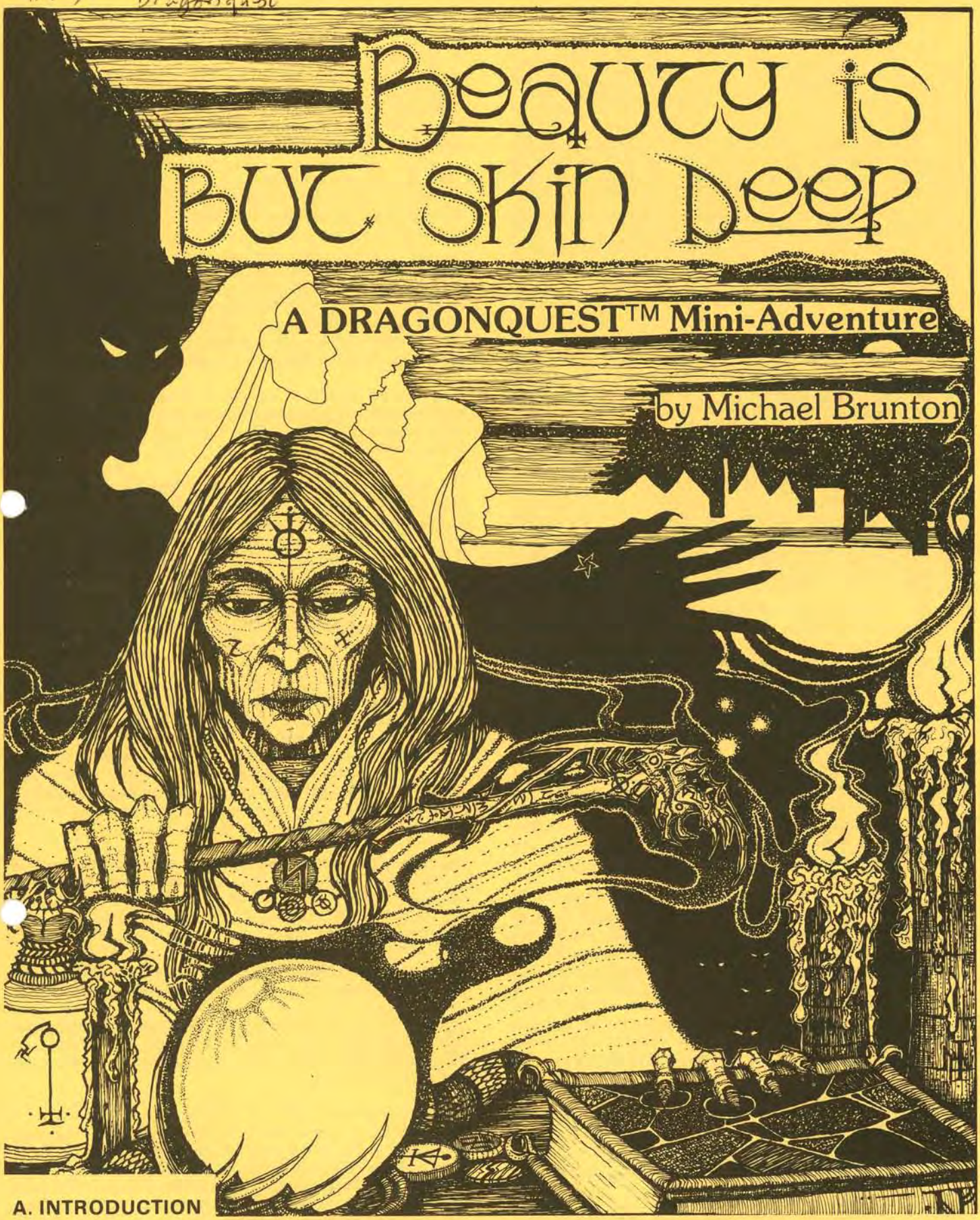


A. INTRODUCTION

This is a DRAGONQUEST™ adventure designed to be played in about two or three hours by a Games Master (GM) plus one player with one character. Although it is a single adventure, but it can be incorporated into an existing campaign, and some notes are provided to aid in doing so.

The DRAGONQUEST game is very different from the D&D® and AD&D™ games. Many of the assumptions which players of the latter type of game would take as read in a fantasy world are not relevant in a DRAGONQUEST adventure. Players more used to the D&D and AD&D games would be well advised to read the article which appears on p.6 of this issue.

Before play begins the GM should read the module and become familiar with the general situation and specific details presented below. If you are a DRAGONQUEST player please stop reading here, as the remainder of the information in this pull-out is for the GM alone.

B. BRIEFING FOR THE GAMES MASTER

1. The City

Throughout this mini-module there are references to 'the city' and 'the Merchants' Quarter'. These are deliberately vague. Other references to groups such as the City Watch are more specific. The adventure has been designed to fit into most city backgrounds that the GM could have without too much extra work. Information such as the location of the buildings described below, and the social organisation of the city, are left to the GM's discretion. Other information, such as the locality of the adventure, is provided, but the GM should feel free to change any of these details.

The adventure can be inserted in whole or in part into a city setting of the GM's own design, or into a commercially available city — such as Sanctuary in the Chaosium's 'Thieves World'. If the GM does not have a whole city setting available, or does not wish to create one, the following information will sketch in a general background for the adventure.

The city lies on a river crossing where several major trade routes intersect. Although not large with 5,000 inhabitants, the city is prosperous enough to be independent of the nobility, a charter having been granted some 75 years ago. The City Guilds now administrate for the town, usually with justice, but always with an eye towards profit. At present the Guild of Wool Merchants is the most powerful, although it has only risen to pre-eminence in the last five years.

The other Guilds include the Navigators, Goldsmiths, Mercantile Adventurers (merchants, not adventurers as such), Slavers, Bards, Mercenaries, Vintners, Armourers, Coopers, Turners, Weavers, Dyers, Slubbers, Architects, etc. The trades such as butcher, baker and candlestick-maker also have small and non-influential Guilds. The Thieves' Guild and the Slayers' Brotherhood (Assassins' Guild) have small memberships, but these are naturally kept secret and have no official stake in the running of the city. The Adventurers' Guild has a similarly low status, but it is not illegal. Law and order, although patchy, are enforced by the City Watch, an organisation paid for by the Guilds. The Watch therefore concentrates on protecting property, but also performs the standard policing functions of protecting life and limb. Members of the Watch also act as customs officials, tax gatherers (when required), and militia cadre.

The Watch is also charged with ensuring that laws related to the use of magic — particularly the banned Colleges of Black Magics, Necromancy and Greater Summonings — are obeyed. The law states that Adepts licenced by the Guildmasters are entitled to practise within the city limits, but that they are totally liable for their spell results and must offer compensation to any who suffer as a result. This is a powerful incentive to excellence on the part of all Adepts. Black Magicians, Necromancers and Summoners cannot practise their arcane arts at all. The penalty for doing so is death and the confiscation of all property.

Hence, if the player character produces proof of Khaana's wrong-doings, he or she can avenge the ghost of Victoria, and rid the city of a malefactor.

2. Incorporation into an existing campaign

The GM may wish to insert this adventure into an existing DragonQuest campaign. Ideally, this should be done gradually, with the players possibly having dealings with the various Non-Player Characters for some time. The players could frequent the Five Elements Inn, using it as a place where they rest between adventures and wait to be approached by patrons. The players could use the moneychanger, Josep Vedla, as a moneyer and banker, or consult Khaana as a fortune teller and wise woman.

The GM should feel free to make any changes necessary to make the module fit into the existing background.

3. The Plot

About a year ago an old woman bought a house near the Merchants' Quarter of the city. She apparently moved away about a fortnight later, leaving the young woman who had arrived on the night of the old woman's disappearance.

The younger woman, Khaana, refused to say where the old woman had gone, and although foul play was suspected, the authorities could not investigate. Khaana had valid documents granting her trusteeship of the old woman's property.

Once the controversy had died down, Khaana set herself up in business as a fortune teller and maker of herbal potions. Whether or not it was Khaana's claimed gypsy blood, her predictions and readings seemed more accurate than most, and her business flourished. Her secondary and much more discreet occupation — that of Courtesan — also prospered.

However, not all is as it appears. At the same time as the old woman vanished there were a number of other disappearances. All of those who disappeared were young women, and no trace of them has ever been found.

The old woman and Khaana are one person. By murder and use of forbidden magic — a Skin Change Spell — Khaana was able to transform herself into her present youthful and beautiful form. Khaana poisoned the young women, and used their skins in her attempts to cast the Skin Change Spell and make herself youthful again. Only the last attempt worked, and Khaana was transformed. She now protects this dark secret from everybody, including her lover, Huskylour. He knows that Khaana practises magic, but not of the murder. They both realise that investigation would result in Khaana's execution.

Unfortunately for her, Khaana's murderous spell-casting had an unexpected side effect. Victoria, the young woman whose skin was used, perished in traumatic circumstances, and so did not find rest. She became a ghost, tied to her bodily remains. These are now buried, along with the remains of the other missing girls, in the cellar of Khaana's house. Victoria's ghost can only wander within 50 yards or so of her resting place, seeking help from anyone who will avenge her death on Khaana and re-bury her mortal remains in hallowed ground.

The adventure begins as the player character arrives at the Five Elements Inn, just round the corner from Khaana's house. Despite the Inn's good reputation and well stocked cellar, trade is at a low ebb. Many guests have left after only one night, claiming that they have been persistently disturbed by something or somebody. Midzer, the owner of the Inn, is growing increasingly concerned over the loss of trade, and is looking for someone to find out why this is happening.

The answer is, of course, Victoria's ghost, who has been haunting the Inn in an attempt to get help. The GM may use either or both of the Player's Briefings to provide clues about the above information.

Disposing of Khaana, and thus helping Victoria, could prove a risky task for a single individual. There are sources of help available: the city watch could be contacted once evidence of Khaana's murders or spell casting is discovered, or Huskylour might be persuaded to act against Khaana if presented with information about her true nature. (See the section on Non-Player Characters for details of Huskylour and a Watch Patrol).

C. BRIEFING FOR THE PLAYER

There are two briefings provided in this section. The GM may use either or both of them. It should be noted that the two do not give the same amount of information. The sources of this information are Midzer and Victoria, and these individuals do not know all of what has occurred.

1. Midzer's Tale

Midzer, a 37 year old human, is the owner and barman of the Five Elements Inn. His physical characterstics are:

PS: 21 MD: 18 AG: 15 MA: 7
PB: 12 EN: 16 FT: 20 WP: 23
PC: 12

He is a Rank 2 Merchant, a Rank 1 Troubador, and speaks Common and Elvish at Rank 9. He uses a Sabre at Rank 3 and a Dagger at Rank 1.

The Inn is well known in the city for its good beer, wines and hospitality, but despite this trade has declined recently, and Midzer is becoming increasingly concerned.

The drop in trade started a year ago — more people were staying in at night when some young girls disappeared and were never found. Trade picked up once girls stopped vanishing, but the Five Elements never seemed to attract as many people as it had before. Something about the Inn, or the neighbourhood, made the customers uneasy. Then, to add insult to injury, some six months ago, guests who were staying in the Inn complained that they were being harrassed while they slept — clothes were being scattered, the beds were being moved, and curious noises could be heard. The word 'poltergeist' was mentioned, and business took a further downturn.

Midzer decided to sleep elsewhere after several nights of this activity, and all the residential customers left as well. The Inn is still used during the day, but once the last customer departs Midzer locks up and heads for a quieter part of the city.

Midzer now wants someone to find out what is happening. He is not happy at the thought of having to pay to do so, but is willing to offer a compromise solution — whoever finds out what has been going on can stay at the Inn for one month without paying, and have a drink on the house as well!

If given the opportunity Midzer will suggest that the player character should spend the night at the Five Elements and find out what is going on in the place. Midzer doesn't really expect an immediate solution, just an explanation.

Midzer has his own thoughts on what has been going on, but they are vague and nowhere near the truth. He is firmly of the opinion that he is the victim of somebody's malice, and that this person must have had some imagined wrong done to them in the past. Midzer doesn't really know who this person could be, because although he is always hard in his business dealings he is always fair. Midzer is also of the opinion that some of his initial troubles can be traced back to the arrival, about one year ago, of Khaana who 'lowered the tone of the area'.

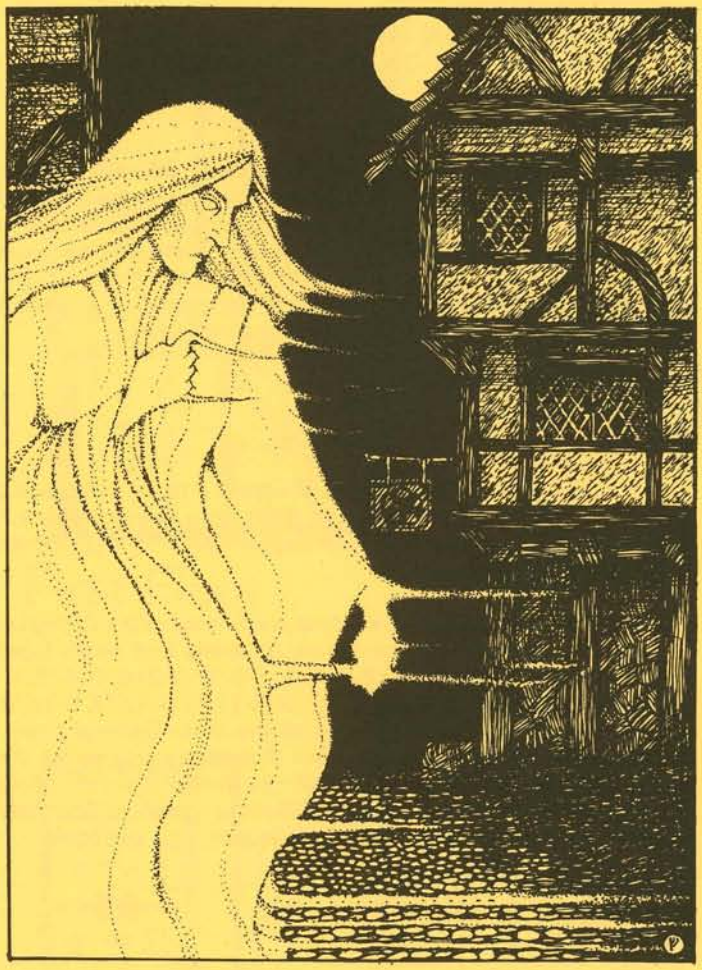
2. Victoria's Tale

Midzer's troubles can indeed be traced back to Khaana, although not as directly or as simply as Midzer would like to believe. The Inn has been regularly visited by the ghost of Victoria, Khaana's last victim. Her characteristics are:

PS: None MD: None AG: None MA: 10
PB: 23 EN: None FT: None WP: 24
PC: 6

As a ghost Victoria has no skills, abilities or Magical powers.

Victoria was one of the unfortunate girls who disappeared about a year ago. In fact, she is the most unfortunate, because the others all died cleanly and did not become ghosts. Victoria's skin was used by Khaana in the casting of a Skin Change Spell, so Khaana looks a great deal like Victoria — anyone who has seen the ghost of Victoria might well mistake Khaana for Victoria at first glance.



Victoria did not start her haunting immediately. The shock of dying — and having her mortal remains used for foul witcheries —tied her closely to her body, but she has gradually moved out into the immediate neighbourhood, seeking someone to avenge her. She is a basically gentle soul, but she is filled with a deep loathing for Khaana and Huskylour. Her sole aim in unlife is the total destruction of the 'wicked old woman'.

If anyone manages to contain their fear long enough to listen to the ghost they will be told what has happened — the killings, the illegal use of Black Magic, the wanderings of the ghost, and the truth about Khaana. Victoria is desperate to tell someone what has been done to her. She remembers how Khaana (as an old woman) hypnotised her, and then killed her with a brew of poisonous herbs. Unfortunately, she does not know why Khaana killed her, or what occurred immediately after she was dead. She is aware that some Black Magical act has taken place, and that her body played a major part in it, but she does not know what happened.

Victoria does not realise that Khaana's appearance has totally changed, because she still sees Khaana in her original form. Victoria therefore refers to Khaana as 'the old woman' and 'the old witch'. This might confuse the player unless he or she realises why Khaana killed Victoria.

The ghost is now rather disheartened at the lack of response that she has had. Victoria does not realise that because she is a ghost she frightens those she tries to contact.

She now wants only to die fully. Before she can do so she must have revenge upon Khaana the Black Magician — Victoria would prefer to use the process of law against Khaana, so that justice is seen to be done. Victoria will mention that evidence might exist in Khaana's house, especially the cellar, which would condemn the woman as a poisoner and user of forbidden magic.

Victoria also wishes to be reburied in hallowed ground.

D. DESCRIPTION OF NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Khaana

Khaana, the wise woman and fortune teller, appears to be an attractive woman in her late twenties. Outwardly she is always charming and courteous, though not without a solid core of commercial good sense. Her most striking features, her eyes, seem, at times, to have someone far older looking out of them, which can lead some to feel uneasy in her presence. Khaana is Moon aspected, and her physical characteristics are:

PS: 11 MD: 11 AG: 11 MA: 21
PB: 20-22 EN: 20 FT: 23 WP: 18
PC: 10

Khaana is a Rank 5 Courtesan and a Rank 2 Thief, with Rank 2 Stealth and Rank 1 Horsemanship. She uses a Dagger at Rank 4, and habitually carries a truesilver dagger (value 1800sp) hidden in her bodice.

Despite her benign facade, Khaana is an Adept of the College of Black Magics who has the following spells and ranks (spell code/ rank achieved): T-1/2, T-2/1, T-3/6, G-3/6, G-4/1, G-8/1, G-11/6, G-12/3, Q-1/4, S-7/3, S-11/6, S-12/7, S-16/3, S-18/1, S-21/2. Khaana knows all the other General Knowledge spells of the College at Rank 0, and has also sworn the Lesser and Greater Pacts of the College, though at present does not have a familiar (as defined on p60 of the rulebook). She does, however, have a large siamese cat, Jasper, as a surrogate:

PS: 4 MD: 21 AG: 22 MA: None
PB: 14 EN: 5 FT: 10 WP: 10
PC: 20 NA: Fur absorbs 1 DP

Khaana is 58, much older than she appears to be. Her remarkably youthful and attractive appearance is the result of her casting a Skin Change Spell (S-21) on herself using the skin of a beautiful young woman instead of an animal pelt. Unfortunately for Khaana, there were side effects. The transformation is not entirely stable — her Physical Beauty varies over the course of a lunar month being at its highest (22) when the Moon is full, and at its lowest (20) when the Moon is new. This new physical appearance is similar to that of the young woman, Victoria, whose skin was used. Khaana is not identical to Victoria, but could have been taken for an older sister. Thirdly, if Khaana is killed the Skin Change Spell will fail, and, in death, she will revert to her former appearance.

There was another side effect in casting the spell. Khaana poisoned the young woman whose skin she used, and kept the unfortunate girl's body for experimental purposes. The young girl, Victoria, having died in traumatic circumstances, became a ghost, tied to her bodily remains. She now wanders the immediate area hoping for revenge.

Khaana has adopted the pose of a gypsy fortune teller and wise woman to make her living in the city, telling fortunes, reading the Tarot, brewing minor love and virility potions, blessing children, and giving advice to the gullible and simple. She also practises her trade as a Courtesan, and does not shirk from a little pickpocketing of clients to supplement her income. Although she continues to use the magic of her College, and occasionally offers shelter to fellow Adepts, no-one in the town suspects that she is guilty of witchcraft, or murder.

Only Huskylour, Khaana's current lover and protector, knows that not all is as it appears.

2. Huskylour

Everybody who deals with Khaana has first to deal with Huskylour. This silent (and not very bright) ex-mercenary handles all of the money aspects of Khaana's various activities,

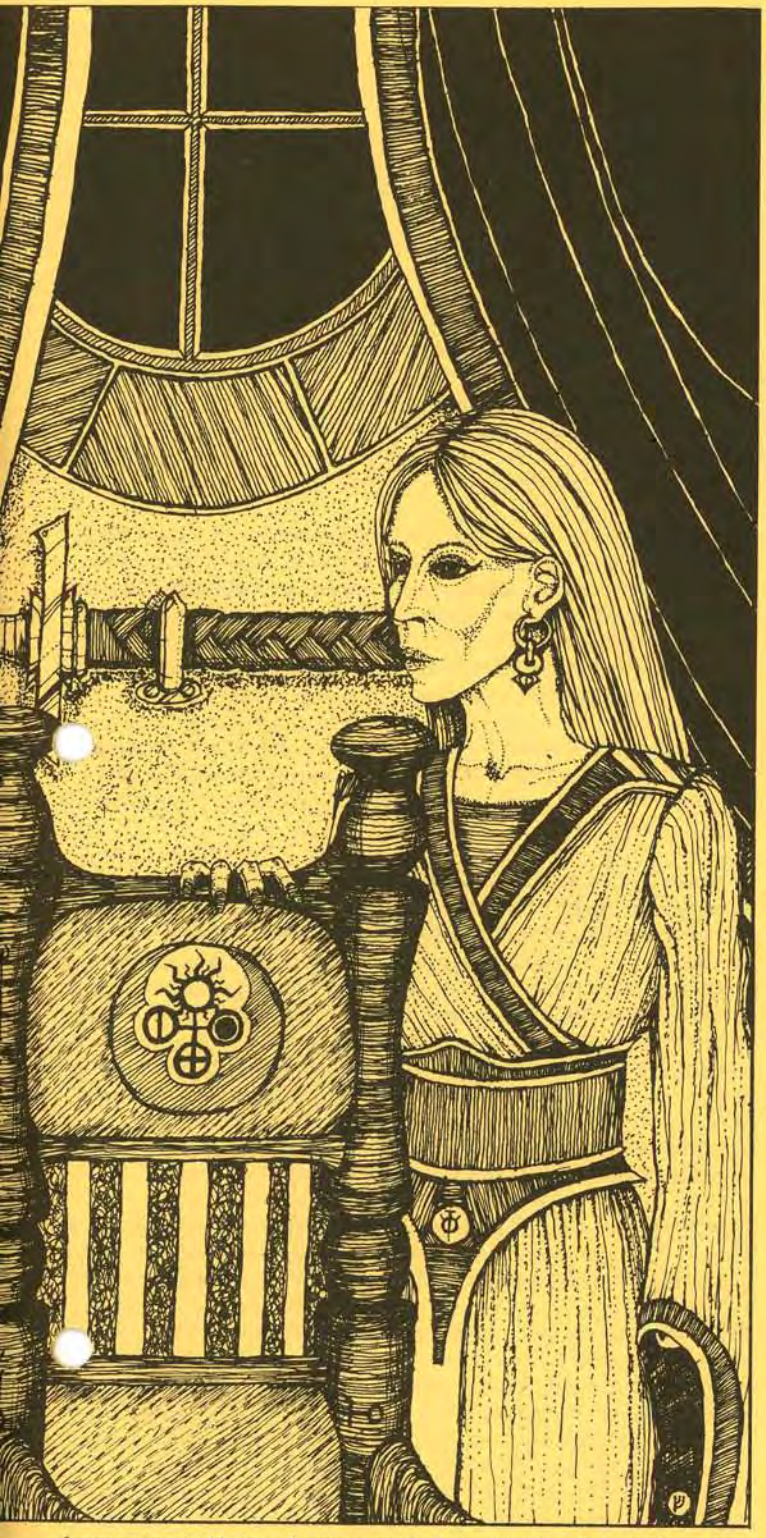
although he is never knowingly allowed to retain the money after any customer has left. Huskylour knows of Khaana's magical affiliations, but Khaana does not worry about this because she is regularly administering doses of a love potion to him.

Huskylour is Sun aspected, and his physical characteristics are:

PS: 20 MD: 20 AG: 20/18 MA: 5
PB: 14 EN: 21 FT: 23 WP: 12
PC: 9

Huskylour uses a Broadsword and Main Gauche at Rank 5, and a Cestus at Rank 6. He is a Rank 1 Military Scientist, Rank 2 Ranger (specialising in Woods), has Rank 4 Horsemanship and can speak Hobgoblin at Rank 4.

Huskylour normally wears leather armour (hence the reduced Agility) and carries a Main Gauche at his belt. He habitually wears a Cestus on his right hand, and rarely restrains himself

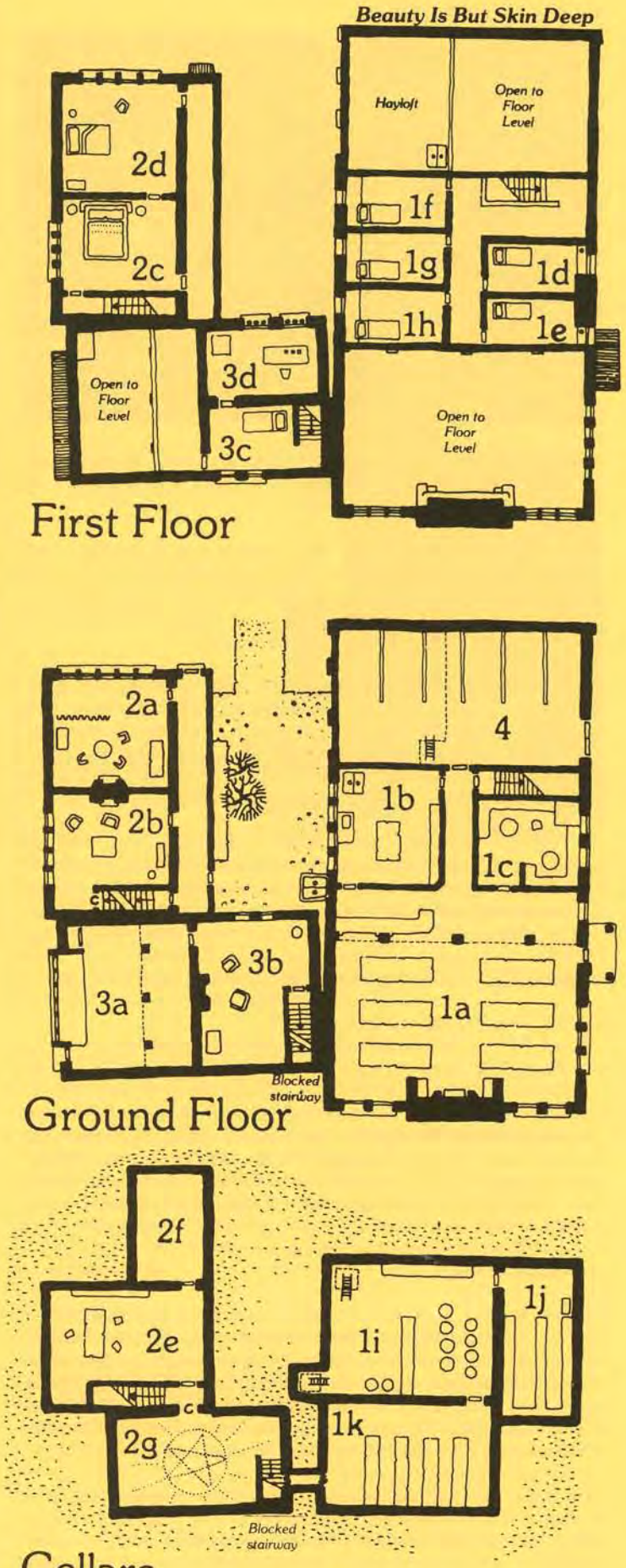


from using it. Unless forewarned of trouble, Huskylour does not not bother to carry his broadsword, preferring to leave it safely tucked in the back room of Khaana's shop.

Huskylour does not know that Khaana is not as young as she appears, or that she killed a young girl to achieve her current physical state. He believes that she is basically well intentioned but misguided. If her true nature is revealed to him, and the nature of her crimes, he will attempt to kill her in a fit of revulsion which he will later regret — until the effects of the love philtres wear off. Huskylour, despite his association and enforced infatuation with Khaana, is basically an honourable man.

3. Josep Vedla

Despite Josep Vedla's profession of moneychanger and shylock, he is a kind and considerate person — for a Dwarf. In any business dealings Vedla is an extremely shrewd and talented bargainer, and usually gets the best of any transaction. By virtue



of this skill he has managed to rise to a position of moderate seniority in the Merchant Adventurers Guild, and as a result is well respected in the city at large.

On a personal level, Vedla is a good friend to Midzer, and regularly dines (and drinks) at the Five Elements Inn. He is as concerned as Midzer at the loss of trade at the Inn, because Midzer owes him four truesilver guineas, although Vedla would never demand that the money be returned.

Vedla has not had many dealings with Khaana. He has, occasionally, visited Khaana in her capacity as a Courtesan, but regards her fortune telling and potion brewing as mumbo-jumbo. Vedla also regards Huskylour as a fool, but is willing to bank quietly the small amounts of money that Huskylour manages to scrape together from time to time.

He has no knowledge whatsoever of Khaana's true magical activities, but has actually seen the ghost of Victoria, without realising what he was seeing. He remembers seeing a sad young woman near his house on several occasions, but has never talked with her.

Vedla is Moon aspected, and his physical characteristics are:

PS: 18 MD: 14 AG: 14 MA: 3
PB: 12 EN: 15 FT: 20 WP: 10
PC: 8

He is a Rank 6 Merchant (specialising in jewelry and precious metals), a Rank 1 Navigator, and a Rank 3 Ranger (specialising in mountains). He reads, writes and speaks Common at Rank 8, and speaks Dwarvish and Gnome at Rank 9. He can also speak Kobold at Rank 5, Halfling at Rank 3, and Elvish at Rank 2. He uses a Crossbow at Rank 2.

4. Frieda Vedlana

Frieda Vedlana is Josep's wife and chief financial backer. Her money originally started the business and, despite Josep's success, he has never been allowed to forget it. Goodwife Vedlana is the main reason why Josep eats, drinks and spends a great deal of time at the Five Elements Inn. Josep is her third husband, the first two dying of food poisoning. Frieda never tires of comparing Joesip with her first two husbands.

She does not confine her criticism solely to Josep, but has strong opinions about her neighbours — and most of the city's other inhabitants. She does not like, trust or respect Khaana, regarding the 'fortune teller' as little better than a strumpet. Likewise Huskylour is treated with contempt because he associates with Khaana. Midzer is treated with a degree of civility, but only because he owes Josep money.

Frieda, at 79, (middle-aged for a Dwarf) is much older than Josep, and her age is beginning to show. Her physical characteristics are:

PS: 12 MD: 17 AG: 14 MA: 14
PB: 10 EN: 9 FT: 17 WP: 25
PC: 5

She speaks Dwarf and Common at Rank 8, and reads and writes Common at Rank 3. She is still a member of the College of Earth Magics, but has not practised the arcane art for several years, and can now only cast Spell G-9 (Spell of Lesser Enchantment) at Rank 4. If pressed, she can use a Dagger at Rank 1.

Frieda is not sensitive enough to have seen Victoria's ghost, let alone realise anything is going on. The GM should make no attempt to dissuade the player from thinking that Frieda is 'the old woman' of whom Victoria speaks.

5. The Watch Patrol

The City Watch enforces the Guilds' laws within the city limits. As such they have wide ranging and poorly defined powers, many actions that they take being made legal by retrospective legislation by the Guilds' Council. However, they usually treat most city inhabitants with justice, the wealth of minor offenders always being taken into account. In serious cases, such as murder, the City Watch is largely incorruptible.

A group is usually given a beat to patrol on a semi-regular basis. The Watch Patrol below is a typical group of street patrollers, whose job is to ensure good order at all times, act as a fire watch, and assist those in distress.

The beat in the area of the Five Elements Inn is patrolled by a Sergeant-at-Arms and three Armsmen. They wander aimlessly through their beat area, and so have a 5% + 2% chance per minute (cumulative) of passing. Once they have appeared the chance of their appearance again drops to a base of 5%. At any time the Watch Patrol may be hailed, and they will appear 10d10 seconds later. If Khaana hails the Watch (she is regarded as a semi-respectable citizen), or the Patrol spots the player character doing something obviously illegal, they will arrest him or her on the spot. Claiming to have been sent on a quest by a ghost will cut little ice with the Watch unless concrete evidence of Khaana's wrong doing can be produced.

The player character is quite entitled to go to the Watch once he or she has evidence of Khaana's murderous activities. The Watch will arrest Khaana and Huskylour, and justice will follow.

The Watch Patrol is led by Sergeant Rumboyle:

PS: 20 MD: 18 AG: 15/14 MA: 6
PB: 12 EN: 16 FT: 23 WP: 15
PC: 11

He is a Rank 3 Thief, Rank 1 Assassin, and uses a Broadsword at Rank 3 and a Sap at Rank 1. He carries these weapons on duty and wears leather armour.

His three Armsmen are Thomas, Henry and Felix:

PS: 19 MD: 17 AG: 14/13 MA: 5
PB: 11 EN: 15 FT: 22 WP: 13
PC: 9

They also wear leather armour, and use Broadswords at Rank 2 and Saps at Rank 1.

E. THE BUILDINGS

The three buildings detailed here are timber framed. Some stone has been used for corners, lintels and the like, but because it is an expensive material it has been used as sparingly as possible. All the floors are wood, and the roofs are wooden shingles. As a result, fire is a grave risk, and any intentional act of arson will easily start a major fire.

1. THE FIVE ELEMENTS INN

1a. The Bar-room
This is the largest room in the Inn. There is no ceiling; the roof-trees and rafters are easily visible. The furniture (there are nine tables and three dozen chairs) is utilitarian, but comfortable. Behind the bar are seven bottles of wine (worth 3cf — 2sp each), a three gallon barrel of ale, sixty pewter tankards, and fifteen pewter goblets. While the Inn is open, the cash float (7d10 copper farthings, 3d10 silver pennies and 1d5 gold shillings) is kept in a strong box under the bar next to Midzer's sabre.

Normally this room is the busiest in the Inn, with 2d5 customers present at any one time while the Inn is open for business. Midzer employs a pot-boy, Scullion, and a serving wench, Maggie. Neither the customers nor the staff know what has occurred, although many will be willing to offer an opinion. The GM should feel free to invent any rumours. Lighting, when required, is provided by lanterns hung from wall brackets and the rafters.

Midzer normally calls last orders before midnight, and the bar-room empties soon after.

1b. The Kitchen
This contains only a cooking range and a bench-like table. From the ceiling hang bunches of herbs, and along the walls hang cooking pots and utensils. In one corner stands a stone trough full of water, and in the opposite corner is a trapdoor (with a ladder) leading into the main cellar (1i) below.

During opening hours a cook, Goodwife Fletcher, is employed in here, producing meals for the customers.

1c. The Snuggery
This is a small parlour for customers who do not wish to conduct their business in the public bar-room. The chairs and table are of much higher quality. Midzer charges no direct fee for its use, but doubles the cost of all drinks and food taken in here.

1d-1h. The Bedrooms
All these rooms are largely the same. All contain a bed, a chair, and a large chest. All the chests are locked, with the keys to each chest in the relevant lock, and all, except the one in 1g, are empty. The chest in that room contains 3cf.

While all the rooms are neat and tidy, they have not been used for several weeks, so dust has settled onto all the flat surfaces.

Midzer normally charges 3 silver pennies per night for a room.

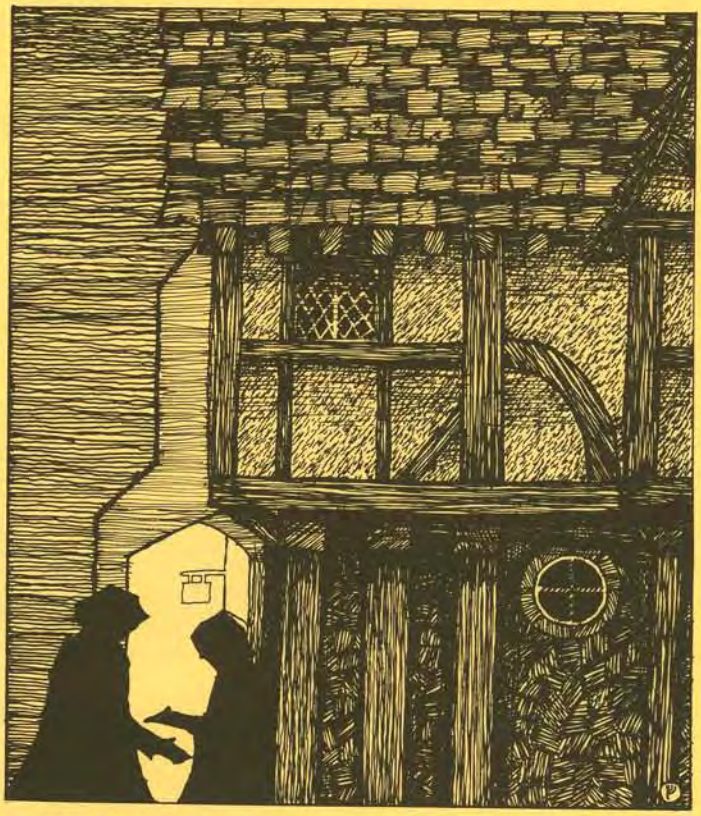
1i. The Main Cellar
This cellar is used for storage of the Inn's stock of beers and ales, in eight hogsheads. Two have been tapped, but the others are full. In the ceiling are two trapdoors. The smaller of the two has a ladder below it and leads to the kitchen. The larger has a wooden ramp and cover, and leads to the small yard between the Inn and Khaana's house. All deliveries are made through this hatch.

Several lanterns hang from the ceiling.

1j. Foodstuffs Store
Hanging from the ceiling are hams, joints of salt beef and pork, rabbits, hares, game birds, and haunches of venison. On shelves are sacks of meal, grain and the like. A single candlestick stands on the floor by the door.

1k. The Wine Cellar
Against all the walls are racks containing stoneware bottles. The bottles contain wine, fortified wine, and spirits. A lantern hangs from the ceiling.

The chance of noticing the secret door is (Perception x 2.5)%, if the character is specifically searching for something out of the ordinary. The secret door is easily visible from the other side, as is the secret door at the other end of the short tunnel.



2. KHAANA'S HOUSE

2a. The Front Parlour
This is where Khaana and Huskylour wait for customers during the day. The room is decorated with hangings and rugs covered in seemingly arcane (and totally meaningless) symbols. The only furniture, two high-backed wooden chairs and a circular table, is likewise inscribed and inlaid with false magical symbols. Heavy curtains can be drawn across the windows when a 'magical process' requires it. The furnishings are intended to add verisimilitude to Khaana's pose as a gypsy fortune teller.

Khaana carries out all her fortune-telling activites in here, either reading of palms (at which she has no skill whatsoever), or her reading of the Tarot (Ritual Q-1 of her College).

2b. The Back Parlour
This room is furnished in a much more comfortable and homely style, and is the main living area of the building. The fireplace also includes a small cooking range, and a store cupboard for food stands beneath the window. Jasper, Khaana's cat, spends most of his days sleeping on top of this cupboard.

Hanging on the wall, in a scabbard, is Huskylour's broadsword.

Next to one of the chairs is a half-completed piece of embroidery.

2c. The Salon
This bedroom is furnished in apparently luxurious style, but is actually rather cheap and gaudy. The room is only used when Khaana is practising her trade as a Courtesan.

2d. The Bedroom
The room is furnished in homely and comfortable style. In the two chests that the room contains are clothes belonging to Khaana and Huskylour. Against one wall stands a full-length mirror of polished bronze.

In the chest containing Khaana's clothes is a strongbox, with a Rank 4 lock. The key is hidden under one of the pillows on the bed. In the box are 157 copper farthings, 204 silver pennies, 43 silver threepences, 27 silver sixpences, 40 gold shillings and 1 true silver guinea.

2e. Workroom
This is Khaana's working area for brewing the potions that she sells to gullible customers. Many are little more than coloured water with a few foul herbs floating about in them. However, Khaana does brew potions and philtres in accordance with Special Alchemy Talent (T-3) of her College.

The room contains a workbench, distilling equipment, glassware, small stoneware bottles containing the 'potions' that Khaana has brewed, bunches of herbs, and other spell components.

The concealed door to 2g can only be spotted if the player character is looking for a concealed entrance. The chance of doing so is (Perception x 3.5)%.

2f. Storage Cellar
This earth floored cellar is almost completely empty. In one corner stand a shovel and a mattock.

Buried under the floor, in shallow graves, are the mortal remains of four young girls, one of whom was Victoria. If threatened, and given the opportunity, Khaana will attempt to animate the skeletons (Spell S-18), and cause them to emerge from their graves and assault the player character. The four skeletons are:

PS: 10 MD: 14 AG: 12 MA: None
PB: 1 EN: 8 FT: 10 WP: 20
PC: 14

They all attack using unarmed combat.

Finding these bodies would provide sufficient evidence to convict Khaana of murder. Forcing Khaana to activate the skeletons would be sufficient evidence to convict her of using Black Magic.

2g. The Cellar
This vaulted chamber is decorated by black hangings covered in arcane symbols. Behind the hangings are two concealed doors, which can only be detected by specifically looking for them. The chance of spotting them is (Perception x 2.5)%.

The room contents are equally arcane. In the centre of the room is inscribed a circle, and at each point of the compass stands a single black candle in an ornately carved candlestick. In the centre of the circle is a silver bowl (worth 100sp) and a small wooden box.

In the box are two carefully wrapped parcels. One is a Hand of Glory (Ritual R-5, p64), the other is a Dead Man's Candle (Ritual R-6, p64). Either of these would be sufficient evidence to convict Khaana of practising Black Magic.

3. THE MONEYCHANGER'S HOUSE

3a. The Front Office
This room goes all the way to the top of the house, and is used for all Josep Vedla's business transactions. The room contents are spartan, being a table, a large chest, and several chairs. Strapped to the underside of the table is a loaded crossbow and a dagger. On the gallery which runs along one wall are stored three crossbows, and 60 crossbow bolts.

In the chest, which has a Rank 6 lock are coins of the following denominations: copper farthings (50), copper ha'pennies (50), silver pennies (50), silver threepences (50), silver sixpences (30), gold shillings (30), platinum shillings (15) and truesilver guineas (15). They are stored in leather bags.

Vedla normally charges 5% of the value of the coins to change from any denomination to any other, and 10% per month compound interest on loans.

3b. The Living Room
Furnished in very comfortable, but diminutive, style — including one chair designed for human proportions — this is Josep and Frieda Vedla's living room. Few people are ever invited in here.

Beneath the stairs is a closed off panel which once led down to the cellar. It has not been opened for five years.

3c. The Solar
This room is little used. On one wall hang a pair of battle axes, one of which is enchanted to Rank 2. The rest of the room is plain, and contains only a Dwarf-sized bed, and a small sea-chest containing the Vedlas' clothes.

3d. The Strong Room
Vedla's strong room is where the money is kept at night. The door has a Rank 6 lock. The room contains three chests, all with Rank 7 locks (Vedla carries the all the keys at all times). In the chests is the cash and other valuables that Vedla is banking for his clients. In one of the chests is a ledger which contains the records of Vedla's dealings. The cash in the chests is: 203 copper farthings, 116 silver pennies, 35 gold shillings, 10 platinum shillings and 12 truesilver guineas.

4. THE STABLES

In here are only such items as would be expected about a stable: ropes, halters, tack, hay, oats, old horseshoes, etc.

F. AND FINALLY....

Regardless of the final outcome, the GM should award experience points at the end of the module as though for a full five-hour session of play. A bonus for Khaana's arrest would be appropriate.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

One of the advantages of writing designer's notes a month *after* finishing the module is 20/20 hindsight. Having had the playtesters report back, and a letter full of helpful comments from Terry Devereux, I had the opportunity to make one or two alterations, change the emphasis in one or two places, and hopefully tighten things up.

This module is experimental in two ways. Firstly, the one player plus GM format. To a large extent, whether or not this works is going to depend on the people who play this module — you! As GM in this adventure you must be prepared to drop broad hints to the player — but only if s/he needs them. Subtle misdirection is also an important part of the adventure — Frieda Vedlana was added solely for that reason, as an alternative candidate for Victoria's 'old woman'.

Secondly, this is intended to be the first in a number of city modules, each introducing a few buildings, a character or two, and being a stand-alone adventure. All will use the same background, roughly link together, and gradually give GMs an entire city (well, the interesting bits anyway) to play with. The next one should appear in a few months' time.

Finally, this is potentially an extremely gruesome situation. The module has been written in a rather neutral style, but the elements of horror are there. Enjoy it!

Mike Brunton

CREDITS

Design & Development	**Mike Brunton**
Cartography	**Paul Ruiz**
Art	**Jeremy Goodwin**
Thanks to	**Rob Drury, David Eastwood, Alan McNamara and Terry Devereux.**

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Please note that the following offers are available **only** to members of the D&D® Players Association. Details of the PA are on p33 of this magazine.

BARGAIN BASEMENT

The Bargain Basement (lair of the infamous Karen) is the place where we consign all the stock which, for some reason or other, can no longer be sold as 'perfect'. The degree of imperfection varies from a missing shrink-wrap to the lack of a page in a module, for example. The items all have two things in common, however, they are all on sale at amazingly reduced prices and none of them is rubbish.

PA members can obtain an up-to-date list of available Bargain Basement items by sending an SAE to Bargain Basement at the address given below. Don't forget to quote your PA membership number.

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A 16-page D&D module designed for 5-8 characters of levels 1-2. Price £2.00, post free.

Rahasia the elven maid faces a fate worse than death at the hands of an evil human, Rahib, who has taken over the Temple of the Sacred Black Rock, cursed its elven servants, and lured Rahasia's father and her betrothed into his clutches. You are Rahasia's last hope. Can you brave the Temple's perils and mete out justice to Rahib?

'R SERIES' MODULES

The 'R series' AD&D™ adventure modules are produced by the RPGA™ organisation in the USA and are available in the UK only to PA members. Each module was designed for use in a GEN CON® tournament and is suitable for normal campaign play as well as including extra details and pre-rolled characters for tournament-style use.

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R2 — THE INVESTIGATION OF HYDELL

A 32-page module designed for 5 characters of 5th level. Price £2.00, post free.

Slinks are obedient, semi-human slaves and are apparently content with their lot. They are protected by law, owned by the wealthy and approved of by the church authorities. Can you sneak into the old ruins to find out who or what slinks really are and where they come from?

R3 — EGG OF THE PHOENIX

A 32-page module designed for 5-8 characters of level 5-9. Price £2.00, post free.

In the lonely town of Northending, the council has called paladin Athelstan to their aid. The fabulous artifact known as the Egg of the Phoenix has been stolen by evil beings.

'MILL DAYS'

The next Mill Day is on Saturday, 22nd October. Two more dates have been provisionally booked for 3rd December and 8th January 1984. We will confirm these dates in the next issue of IMAGINE magazine.

Mill Days are open to PA members only. There is no fee but places must be booked in advance. For details, write to 'Players Association Mill Days' at the address below, enclosing an SAE.

PA PINS

These are half-inch diameter brushed steel badges carrying our Dragon's-Head logo. They will double as a lapel badge or tie-pin and will discreetly identify you as a player and PA member. Price £0.95 each, post free.

PA T-SHIRTS

White cotton T-shirts with full-colour design of a dragon towering over the D&D symbol. Available in S, M and L (please state size when ordering). £3.50 each, post free.

PAN BACK ISSUES

It always happens. No sooner does a magazine come to an end than its back issues become collector's items. PA members can obtain back issues of PANs 1-12 for £0.50 each or £5.00 for a set of 12, post free.

Offers are open to PA members only. Orders to: PA Special Offers, TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.

Remember to include your PA membership number when ordering. All offers subject to availability.

D&D® PLAYERS ASSOCIATION NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE BRITISH
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®
PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

PAN PIPINGS

This issue of Pipings is going to be as inoffensive as possible — bland if you prefer that term. This is because the magazine staff have threatened to 'bash my brains out'. They wouldn't know where to hit me.

At about the same time as this issue of IMAGINE™ magazine is published, TSR UK will be moving out of the Mill (NO, we are not doing a midnight flit to avoid the bailiffs! We are moving in broad daylight actually). Gone will be the dangers of wandering through the Sales office to get to the photocopier, the semi-clandestine meetings and ambushes on the spiral staircase, the culinary delights of the local Chinese take-away, the rot-infested brickwork next to my desk.... Already I can feel a heady attack of nostalgia approaching — 'When I joined the company there were fourteen of us working in a shoebox in t'middle o' Rathmore Road, lad. You young uns don't know you've been born.... '

Now we are moving to real offices with real companies as neighbours. Exactly what Royal Assurance will make of us is somewhat open to question.... 'Good Lord, Nigel. Those chappies down the hall don't believe in mutually assured policies, and threatened to set their pet dragon on me!'

TSR are, at last, leaving The Mill. It has been home for the company for more than three years now, and in that time we have expanded (some would say spread like the plague) into most of the office space in the building. And now there just isn't any more room. Unless the management introduce a system similar to slave ships ('Pack 'em sideways, Mr Mainbrace') we have reached Mill saturation point.

So, where are we going? Hopes of relocating to the Cayman Isles were rapidly quashed. No exotic palm-covered offices with dusky maidens soothing the creative brow for us (dusky men for the female staff of course). All these delightful images faded before the truth. TSR are staying in Cambridge, but we are going up in the world, to the top of just about the only hill in the place. The new (to us) offices are in Mount Pleasant House, Mount Pleasant, Cambridge.

Mount Pleasant House. It has the ring of an insane asylum about it. Hmm. Is there something that someone hasn't told me? Perhaps not, but even paranoids have enemies.

This relocation, of course, brings a problem for all PA members who were hoping to attend Mill Days. We will not be at the Mill any more. There will still be Saturdays of game playing under the auspices of TSR, but what are we going to call them? 'Pleasant Days' is decidedly twee, and sounds like some gratuitous American TV serial. 'Games Days' has already been used by.... somebody else. You see the problem: 'Mount ....' — perhaps we had better not go into that one, I still haven't recovered from the last beating.

So, there we have it. What are we going to call the Mill Days? Answers on a postcard please.

And so on to a different subject. By now Players Association members should have received a copy of the new Broadsheet. If you have a burning desire to appear in print before an audience of the cognoscenti of the D&D® game with, well, almost anything, then feel free to submit material for the Broadsheet. Ideally, it will turn into a clearing house for new ideas for and of PA members. If you don't write anything you'll only have to put up with more of MY ramblings....

I still haven't got control of the editorial column at the front of the magazine either. Ah well, back to the grindstone.

Mike Brunton

DISPEL CONFUSION

Dispel Confusion is a question and answer column intended to help hobby gamers overcome problems they have had with game rules.

At present, we can in general only help with games produced by TSR; while our answers may not be fully 'official', we have contact with the designers themselves. In future, we hope to get answers from those who design other games.

For good answers we first need good questions – so send your queries to:
Players Association (Dispel Confusion), TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games

Q. What happens to cursed armour and/or weaponry when hit in combat by a rust monster or disenchanter? (Basic/Advanced)

A. We suggest that when any cursed metal magical item is hit by a rust monster it should be treated like any other magic item attacked in this fashion. The cursed object will have a 10% chance that it will not rust per 'minus' of the object. A rust monster is not interested in the magical nature of the metal object, merely its food value as rust.

We think the disenchanter will probably have a disinclination for draining the magic from a cursed item. It lives on the energy inherent in magic items, and the energy in cursed items might be expected to come well down on its gourmet preference list. But Don Turnbull thinks otherwise, and he wrote the thing. Take your pick.

Q. What do the various code letters on TSR modules mean?

A. Code letters were originally intended to relate to the subject matter of the module, thus the 'G' series about giants, the 'D' series — 'Descent into the Depths of the Earth', and the solitary 'Q' module — 'Queen of the Demonweb Pits'. The other early module to follow this convention was T1 — part of the 'Temple of Elemental Evil' series.

In future, module codes should relate to their use. Therefore we should get: 'B' — Basic D&D® modules, 'X' — Expert D&D modules, 'K' — Companion D&D modules (when the Companion Set is finally published), 'N' — AD&D™ modules for novice players, 'L' — AD&D modules for low level characters, 'I' — AD&D modules for intermediate characters, 'C' — AD&D competition modules (originally used as tournament modules), 'S' — AD&D special modules (generally high level and deadly), 'WG' — WORLD OF GREWHAWK™ Campaign material, and 'EX' — AD&D modules designed to be dropped into the DM's own dungeon.

'A' series modules were coded that way for no readily discernible reason. 'U' and 'UK' coded modules are designed in the United Kingdom. The code is therefore a method of indicating their source.

Other TSR game systems are much simpler: 'GB' — GANGBUSTERS™ modules, 'BH' — BOOT HILL™ modules, 'GW' — GAMMA WORLD™ modules and 'SF' — STAR FRONTIERS™ modules.

Q. If a troll is reduced to -8 hp by normal combat (not by being burnt), and then a cleric casts an animate dead spell on the body, what happens? Is the result a zombie with regenerative power, a normal zombie or a troll which regenerates and negates the spell? (Advanced)

A. This is a tricky one. If the troll were left alone it would regenerate into an active, very much alive, troll. If burnt it would be permanently dead; the regenerative power would have been interrupted. Therefore, casting an animate dead spell upon the hapless body of a troll will also interfere with its regeneration, 'killing' it, and resulting in a zombie — without the power to regenerate because this had been ruined by the casting of the spell. This, of course, leaves the party with a zombie as a faithful porter. On the whole, this is not a bad way of dealing with a troll.

Q. What happens if a magic user loses a spell book? Are the spells lost/forgotten, and, if so, how may they be retrieved? (Advanced)

TURNBULL TALKING

Let's deal with this trademark business.

It will not have escaped the attention of even the most laid-back reader that the pages of this learned journal are liberally sprinkled with odd little symbols, as though we chose to do the printing in an ants' nest and some drunken ants had wandered suicidally into the works. The main ones are ™ and ®, though every so often there might be a © (which since it isn't a trade mark I will ignore anyway). Why clutter up the magazine with these things, you may ask — they certainly mar the appearance and tidiness of the text.

Well, let's say you come up with a Bright Idea — for the sake of example, you discover a method whereby the leaves of the pituri plant, if suitably doctored and then swallowed, give the swallower perfect musical harmony. You make pills out of the concoction and called them Armpits ((h)arm(ony).... pit(uri)s — right?). They sell like hot cakes. Soon vast sections of the population are singing such dulcet harmonies as to make the angels weep with joy, while others are indulging in harmonies so speculative as to divorce them utterly from the adjacent proceedings.

Unfortunately there are bad people out there; soon they become jealous of your success and greedy for a share. Suddenly you notice sales are dropping and on investigation find the reason: people are now ignoring your pills and instead buying Armpit toothpaste, Armpit lozenges, Armpit throat sprays and Armpit best gin. And you find you can't stop them — they are using your invention and the name you invented for it, but legally they have every right to do so.

You have omitted to protect your property and others can burgle it freely.

The answer, had you thought of it early enough, lies in the legal trade mark and patent arena. But it isn't sufficient just to obtain registration of a trade mark — if the mark is to be effective, the owners have to demonstrate that is a trade mark

A. The magic user has effectively lost one of his or her recipe books for spells. Unless he or she kept a copy of the book then the spells in the book cannot be re-memorised once used.

The only option in a case like this is for the magic user to construct a new copy of the book, by trading for/stealing/copying the spells that were contained within it. This time, however, because the spells had already been in a spell book (and had been understood), the magic user in question would not have to check to see if he or she could know the spell (**Players Handbook** p10, Intelligence Table II).

The new spell book would still cost the same amount in raw material to make, and would take just as long as the original.

Q. Do monks need magic weapons to hit creatures harmed only by +1 or better enchanted weapons — or can they use open hand attacks? (Advanced)

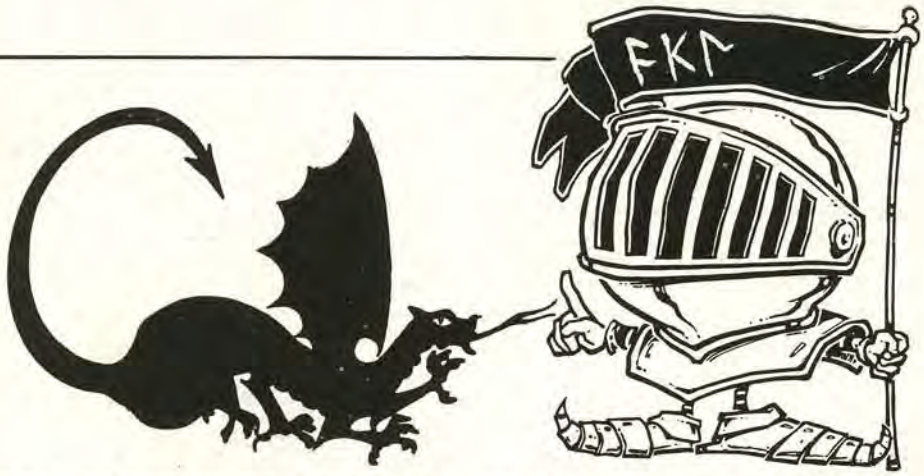
A. There are only two cases in which the pre-requisite of a magic weapon to hit something is relaxed. The first of these is the case of a massively strong monster hitting a creature that would normally only be hit by a magic weapon (**Dungeon Masters Guide** p75 'Creatures struck only by magical weapons'). This applies only to monsters. The second is the special ruling in the case of the barbarian class, which allows them, and them alone, a similar ability. Monks do therefore require magical weaponry to hit creatures that can only be struck by such weaponry, despite their bare-handed combat ability.

RUNEQUEST

Q. Would the possession of pure iron or other metal prevent the wearer from being affected by magic as well as preventing him or her casting it? (**RuneQuest**)

A. Although not specifically stated in the game, the effect of iron and other pure metals seems to be 'earthing' the charge of power that a character has built up to cast a spell (similar to an electrical charge being earthed). In this case, only the caster would be affected by the pure metal, because the victim of a spell is suffering the effect of the magical discharge anyway.

Graeme Morris & Mike Brunton



pretty well wherever and whenever it is used. Even more complex — in the USA the mark has to be used in a particular way so that the mark and the word it modifies becomes an adjective. Armpit™ or Armpit® is inadequate and incorrect — it should be 'The ARMPIT™ pills' or some such.

Now Brian Blume and Gary Gygax were wise enough to trade mark TSR's top-selling game right from the outset — in order to prevent greedy and lazy outsiders grabbing their property. Obviously this could not prevent greedy and lazy outsiders from copying the ideas and calling the result by a different name; but it's better than nothing.

Anyway, that is why we use trade marks in these pages — to protect TSR's property against thieves. It may look untidy at times, but it can't be helped. Wouldn't you, given similar circumstances, do your best to protect your own property too?

Don Turnbull

PA MEMBERSHIP

The PA is a club for all players of role playing games, particularly the D&D® and AD&D™ games. Since it was founded in 1981, the PA has become the country's largest D&D club, and now has this 4-page section in IMAGINE™ magazine. The benefits of membership include:

* Free quarterly broadsheet featuring hobby articles and news, competitions and new product information.
* Free badge, sticker and personalised 'credit-card style' membership card.
* Special offers available only to PA members, including the 'R' series of modules and Bargain Basement — your chance to buy damaged-but-usable stock at greatly reduced prices. Fuller details of the special offers are given on page 31.
* Free postage and packing on mail orders from TSR UK Ltd for UK and BFPO members.
* Discounts on tickets for GamesFair hobby conventions.
* Listings of PA members in your area (send SAE).

Membership of the PA costs £2.50 per year for new UK or BFPO members (£2.00 for renewals) and £5.00 (or US $10) for overseas members. All you have to do is fill in this coupon and send it to:

PA Memberships, TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge CB1 4AD, England

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☐ Please enrol me as a new member of the Players Association. I enclose a cheque/PO for £2.50 (overseas £5.00 or US $10).

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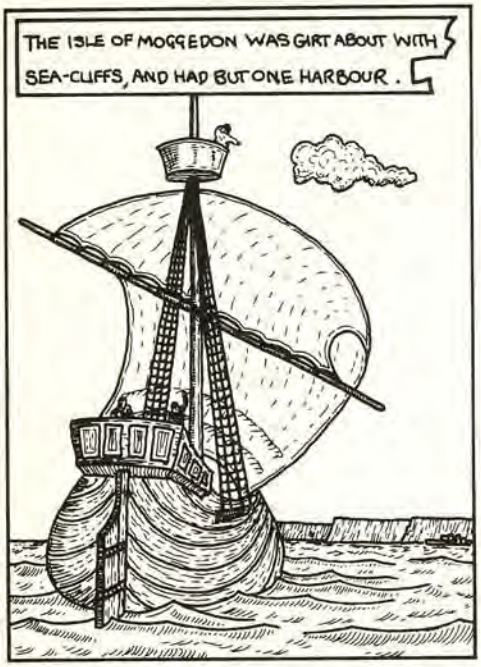
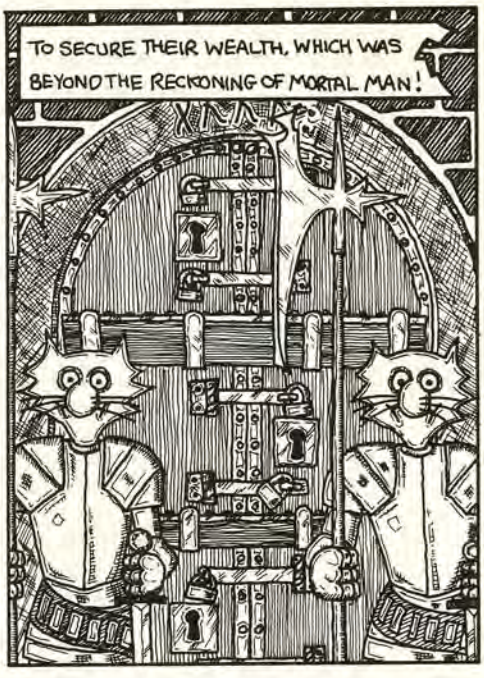


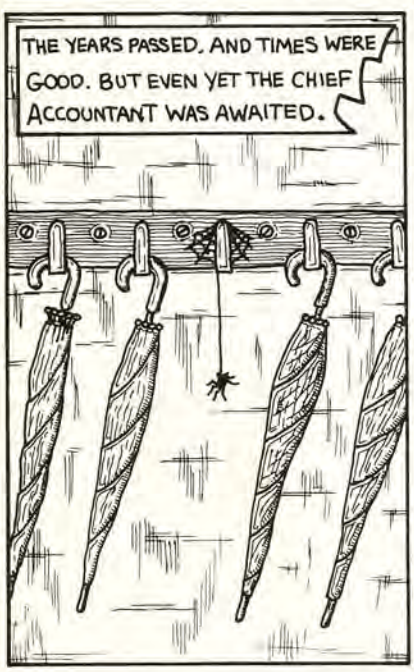


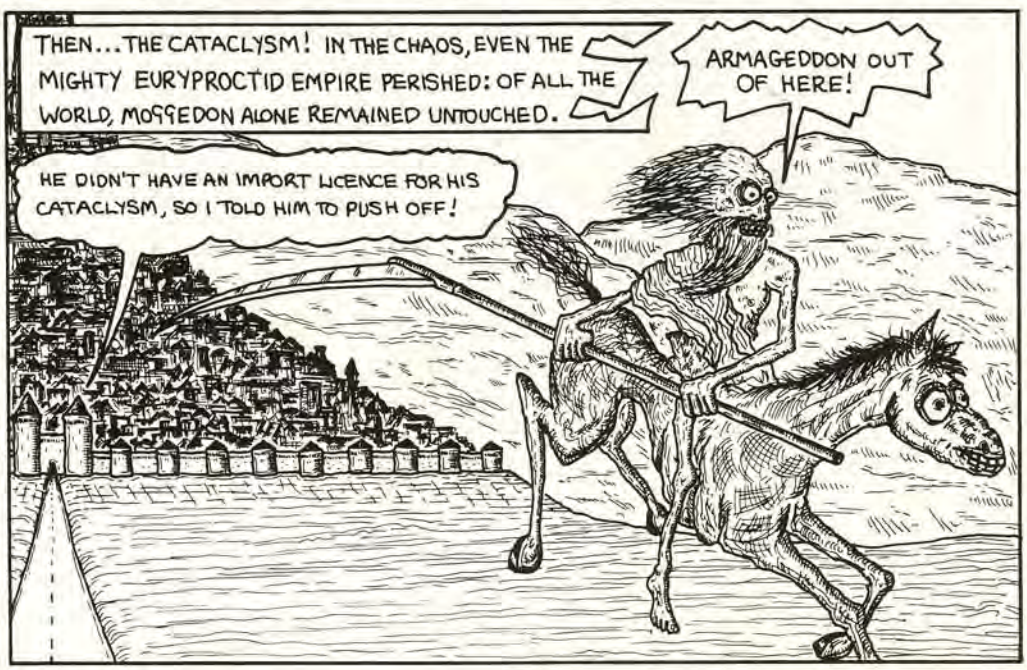
THE EXILES DID EXPLOIT THEIR OFF-SHORE SITUATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY...
A PLEASURE TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU, MR. CROM.

RUBIC OF MOGGEDON

HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE THE SECOND

BUT EVEN IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE EURYPROCTID EMPIRE ONE SMALL SEED OF DISSATISFACTION GREW AND FLOURISHED. HATED BY ALL, THE IMPERIAL TAX-INSPECTORS STROVE TO MAINTAIN THEIR RIGHTS OF LARCENY, THEFT AND EMBEZZLEMENT IN THE FACE OF SOUND FISCAL POLICY. MANY WERE CAUGHT, BUT THE LUCKY FEW, LED BY FILCH, DEPUTY CHIEF ACCOUNTANT IN THE AUDITING DEPT., ESCAPED TO A SECURE HAVEN FAR TO THE SOUTH ON THE ISLE OF MOGGEDON. HERE THEY AWAITED THE CHIEF ACCOUNTANT, BEARER OF THE HOLY BOOKS WHOSE CONTENT NO MAN KNEW IN FULL. FOR IT WAS SAID THAT WITH HIS COMING, THE RICHES OF EMPIRE WOULD FLOW INTO THE VAULTS OF MOGGEDON.




THEN... THE CATACLYSM! IN THE CHAOS, EVEN THE MIGHTY EURYPROCTID EMPIRE PERISHED: OF ALL THE WORLD, MOGGEDON ALONE REMAINED UNTOUCHED.
ARMAGEDDON OUT OF HERE!
HE DIDN'T HAVE AN IMPORT LICENCE FOR HIS CATACLYSM, SO I TOLD HIM TO PUSH OFF!

The Imagination Machine

by Mike Costello

COMING SOON...

Things move fast in the micro community, and since I started this series of articles, prices of computer hardware have dropped around 20% in the shops. But many of the people interested in getting into computer gaming seem to be reacting to this by buying a machine that is more powerful, for the same price that they would have paid for a less impressive microcomputer a few months ago. There is no doubt that home computers will continue to get more powerful over the next few years; what capabilities can we expect from them in future, and what sort of games will become possible that are not feasible now?

More memory

There is little point in looking more than two years ahead; accurate predictions cannot be made into the far future, and in any case the events likely in the next twelve months or so are interesting enough. A lot of discussion has been stirred up by the forthcoming release of a 256K, 16-bit computer for £400; after all, this is no more than the price of a BBC Micro. But it is not as simple as that. Although the new machine has much more memory than is usually available, most of it is taken up with an overblown operating system, leaving little space for programs. This is necessary because an operating system has to be very sophisticated to take full advantage of the abilities of such a computer. In practice, 512K will shortly be regarded as the acceptable minimum for such machines.

This should not add too much to the price and will allow games taking up 200K or more; gigantic games, rather like some of the Adventures for the Apple that have appeared recently in the States. The difference is that they will not rely on constant disc access, as separate sections of the program are loaded into and out of memory. Everything will be in RAM at the same time; this sounds simple enough until you contemplate waiting 30 minutes for such a program to load from cassette.

This obviously is not acceptable, and disc storage will have to be provided as standard with such computers. The new microfloppy discs are capable of providing mass storage to cope with the demands of 16-bit machines, but inevitably the price goes up. So a usable 16-bit machine will not be within the budget of the average home user by the end of 1983, but in a year's time, prices will have dropped considerably.

We may also see an end to the familiar guessing game: am I buying the right micro, or should I have chosen a different one, which features the kind of software I am interested in? The tendency now is for manufacturers to buy a licence to use an existing operating system, such as MS-DOS or CP/M-86, rather than developing their own, which never did make much sense anyway. As a result, it becomes easier to 'port' software from one make to another, and new programs can be released simultaneously in versions for four or five machines. It could be that there will still be a multiplicity of operating systems, but even so, the manufacturers are forced in practice to support all the popular ones, and make sure they introduce no eccentricities into their designs which would make their machines incompatible with one of the systems.

It is significant that the 16-bit machine referred to earlier is British; there seems no likelihood that American computers, or indeed software, will regain the dominance they once held in this country, in the foreseeable future. Patriotic fervour aside, this is really a pity; the danger is that software authors in the two countries will go their separate ways and there will be no intermingling of experience to improve the overall quality of games software.

Concealed benefits

At the same time, there are some concealed benefits to the British gaming hobby in this situation. Sections of the hobby such as board wargaming and conventional role-playing have been dominated by American products for many years; after all, how many British role-playing systems are there? This has not happened in the computer gaming hobby, partly because of the relative unpopularity of American computers among home users and partly because US software houses have not bothered to rewrite their successful titles for computers such as Spectrum and Dragon. So it is possible that computer gamers in the UK will, out of necessity, produce their own home micro software and even market it on a commercial basis, which can be a rewarding experience, although full of pitfalls. But right now it is too early to tell how things will go.

It looks as if computer games software will become more complex (well, much longer), but will it become more sophisticated? In terms of sound and graphics facilities, the limit has probably already been reached. The sound capabilities of some of the micros already available are under-exploited as it is, due to the programming effort and amount of specialised knowledge needed to use them fully (music theory is not a simple discipline and mastery of it requires around two years of full-time study). The degree of resolution of screen displays already exceeds the ability of an unmodified TV to cope with; a purpose-built monitor can provide about double this amount of resolution, but the price is prohibitive for most buyers. On the other hand, higher operating speeds on the newer micros permit the use of multitasking techniques, to provide simultaneous visual and sound output while processing of a program text continues. And a compiler is generally provided for any high-level language supplied with a 16-bit machine; these features, taken together, should in future make it possible for the home programmer to achieve effects in BASIC which would previously have required a machine-code program.

Finally, a word about Micronet 800. This is at the moment the only commercial organisation in this country providing a service similar to those available from a number of sources in the States. Briefly, it allows any micro owner with a telephone to communicate with the Micronet services or with any other user possessing the same equipment. A number of projects are being investigated at the moment; solo games dialled up by Micronet subscribers, rather like a visually-oriented version of a solo adventure in book form; multi-player games moderated either centrally or by another Micronet user, with Turn moves and results being transmitted back and forth between micros at the terminals. No new technological advances are needed to achieve this, as it is really an application of existing technology, but the potential is very great and we may be hearing a lot more about Micronet in future.

GamesFair '84

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- ★ Seminar with Gary Gygax on Friday evening.
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Successful bookings will be confirmed by post. Full details and confirmation of events will be given in the GamesFair programme, which will be mailed to attendees in March.
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Book Review

*Dave Pringle, editor of **Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction**, looks at recent releases and re-releases in the world of adventure fiction, and some interesting non-fiction.*

Helliconia Spring (Granada, £1.95) is Brian Aldiss's most ambitious SF novel to date. Some 550 pages long and the first of a trilogy, it is conceived on a vast scale, a scale which allows for a leisurely pace — perhaps too leisurely.

Helliconia is a world with two suns and an immensely long year: the 'spring' of the title lasts for many of our centuries. Battling against this hostile environment is a colony of human beings who share the planet with intelligent creatures known as Phagors. Aldiss has fun building up the ecology of his teeming world. In a style which is at times reminiscent of his early masterpiece **Hothouse** (1962), he invokes a profuse flora and fauna, not to mention entire societies of persons with such jaw-breaking names as Hrr-Brahl Yprt and Kzahhn Hrr-Tryhk Hrast. Often the prose is almost incantatory with neologisms: 'They raided the migratory herds of yelk and gunnadu.... down the isthmus of Chalce into Campannlat'. Great stuff for readers who like to lose themselves in a whole sub-world of invention.

Clearly Aldiss is aiming for the big time with this book and its projected sequels: he is hoping to capture the J R R Tolkien/Frank Herbert market, no less. In all fairness one must say that Helliconia is a better-realized world than ever Dune was, but one cannot help wondering what became of the ideal of *economy of means* which was well exemplified in the honed short stories and slim but telling novels of Aldiss's heyday. It seems the hour of the blockbuster has arrived and there is little we can do but submit.

For some years now, Gregory Benford has enjoyed a growing reputation as the best 'hard' SF writer in America. He consolidates that reputation with his new novel **Against Infinity** (Gollancz, £7.95). This is science fiction in the old style, although written in contemporary language. Set on Ganymede, a moon of Jupiter, the book is full of scrupulous scientific detail. Benford outdoes the Heinlein of the 1950s in his ability to speculate realistically from a solid scientific base: he is that rare mixture, a real scientist *and* a real writer.

Basically it is a good old American hunting story, about a boy, Manuel, and his crusty companion, Old Matt, who are in pursuit of an enigmatic alien machine, The Aleph. The narrative conveys a fine sense of mystery and awe. As in such earlier novels as **In the Ocean of the Night** (1977), Benford is tackling his favourite theme of Humanity confronting the Other. There is no theme more fundamental to science fiction.

I mentioned Robert Heinlein in passing: two re-issues of his work have just come to hand. They are a novel, **Farnham's Freehold** (Corgi, £1.95), and a collection, **The Menace from Earth** (Corgi, £1.75), and they are representative of both the worst and the best of Heinlein. Avoid the novel, which shows the author at his most crassly opinionated, and savour

Gregory Benford

such short stories as 'The Year of the Jackpot', a manic end-of-the-world take, and 'By His Bootstraps', simply the best time-travel yarn since Wells. The early Heinlein was a Natural.

More re-issues: Harry Harrison's **Captive Universe** (Granada, £1.50) is one of his best novels. An 'enclosed world' story, about a young man who seeks to break through to the truth, it is full of familiar twists and turns — but skilfully handled. Also by Harry Harrison are the short-story collections **Two Tales and Eight Tomorrows** and **Prime Number** (Sphere, £1.50 each). These early stories are mostly light and bright, although 'The Streets of Ashkelon' is a memorable alien melodrama on a religious theme.

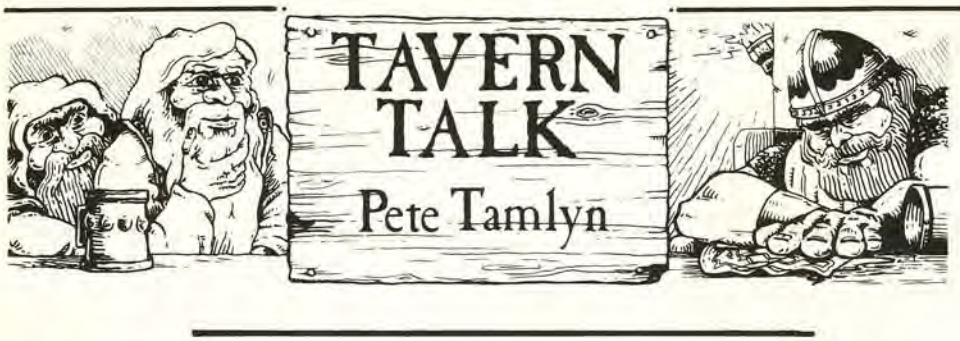
Cellars by John Shirley (Sphere, £1.95) is an urban horror story of the type invented by veteran fantasist Fritz Leiber. John Shirley (a sometime rock musician) writes vividly enough, though not quite as well as the old master. The city is New York, the hero a journalist who dabbles in the occult; he is attracted to a young woman who appears to have extra-sensory powers; various gruesome murders take place in underground locations; the mystery and the violence build up.... It is a good read, and the ending is nasty. John Shirley also has an excellent story in the latest issue of **Interzone**. Although entirely different in tone, it shows the same obsession with things lurking beneath our feet, unnameable terrors in the forgotten 'cellars' of modern civilisation.

Finally, a book we have all been waiting for: **The Steven Spielberg Story** by Tony

Crawley (Zomba, £4.50). Written in breathless journalese, this is no biographical masterpiece but it serves to remind us how irrelevant the written word has become in an age when clever, confident lads like Spielberg are the ones who are *really* setting the pace in terms of conveying science-fiction dreams to the masses. How can one argue with a success story like Spielberg's? He and his mate George Lucas have already directed or produced most of the top ten money-making movies *Of* (as they say) *All Time*. And what is more, what is truly astonishing, the majority of those films are SF. Come to think of it, there is only one person who has been more successful than even Spielberg and Lucas: the composer John Williams, who has written the music for virtually all their films, not to mention a little thing called **Superman**....

Dave Pringle

Dave Pringle will be back with more book reviews to whet your appetite in issue 9. Next month, however, Colin Greenland will be here once again, looking at the work of some of Spielberg's contemporaries in the film world.



A thousand curses on their heads! Eh? Who? Games Workshop, who else? Here am I, all eager to use my new-found publicity outlet to launch a massive ballot stuffing campaign for the Games Day '83 Awards, and what do they do? They bring the closing date for votes forward, so that it will be past by the time you read this. Bah! Mind you, I was a bit puzzled as to why they needed two months to sort out the results. Then I noticed that Charles Vasey was in charge of the count. My theory was that perhaps Charles was having difficulty with his 'hand calculator' and might have to use his toes as well, but a GW spokesman said that it would take two months to lure him out of the pub.

I've had a couple of rather disappointing letters recently, from members of fanzine editorial teams who were quitting their current projects and starting up on their own because fellow editors couldn't be bothered to get the zine out on time. Lack of reliability is probably the major problem with FRP fanzines, and while some have very real difficulties with printers, there is no excuse for just not bothering. Fanzines can be long-lived and regular, as **Dragonlords**, **Wyrms Claw** and any number of postal games zines bear witness. Let's have a bit more responsibility, please folks.

One of the more interesting things about having a fiancée who is a teacher is that every summer you get treated to tales of all the strange things that people have written in their exams. My favourite this year comes from Paul Davison who was writing about his favourite hobby. 'In order to play D&D' he says, 'I need a slide rule....' Hmm, I think I'll stick to writing my own rules, these commercial games sound a bit too complicated.

And so to Dragonmeet whereat the assembled multitudes of FRPers, declining the twin attractions of a Test Match and the British Grand Prix, descended upon the unsuspecting city of Westminster, an area of London fortunately well used to the presence of loud-mouthed lunatics. Central Hall is owned by Methodists and hence has no bar — which, on such a sweltering day, was near disastrous. Even the fur-clad Treasure Trap types were seen to doff their armour at times!

Fortunately the nearby Westminster Arms provided a suitable haven for the rapidly dehydrating fanzine hacks who, as usual, were wearing confusing badges in order to prove that they were far too famous to need any sort of identification. Paul Mason was appearing as 'Fergus O'Connor' and Mike Lewis, without his X-Men T-shirt, read 'Me? Mike Lewis? How dare you!'. Ian Marsh's badge warned everyone, 'If you are Trevor Mendham, go away', while Alex Zbyslaw claimed to be Paul Mason which is just as well as no-one can pronounce his real name. Matt Williams was reported to have bought a round of drinks but most experts dismissed this as a heat-induced hallucination.

The Games Workshop chappies were being extremely helpful, especially Ivan Livinghell who was persuaded to part with a free copy of **White Dwarf 41** to replace the one that they forgot to send me. Ivan also tried hard to prove to me that people do get paid for writing for WD, but the only contributors that he could find were GW employees and every single one, when asked if he had been paid for his last contribution, said 'no'. I picked up a copy of the Avalon Hill version of Kingmaker on the GW stand which quite pleased me, as everywhere else I'd tried told me that Philmar weren't allowing it to be imported any more. But this time Ivan had the last laugh for, when I got home, I discovered that it didn't have any rules in it . As he said, 'We'll sell you anything'. Yeah, probably 'down the river'.

The main event of the day, however (excluding the Williams round which is patently unbelievable), was when ace reporter Pete Tamlyn, revealed to a shocked circle of fanzine editors that Marc Gascoigne was currently employed in the fantasy section at Games Centre. Messrs Lewis and Marsh were suitably aghast at the nature of the news though not at the means of its arrival. As Mike said, 'I didn't know he'd left **Dragonlords** until he announced it in **Acolyte**'.

And finally for this issue, Ye Tavern is moving. Only about half a mile down the road, but at least this time the house is mine. All gossip, fan mail and letter bombs should henceforth be directed to: 2 Poplar Road, The Coppice, Aylesbury. Next month's column will come live from the shores of Loch Ness where Kat and I are spending our honeymoon and will include the inside story of the 'Zine Poll results. Order your copy now.

Pete Tamlyn

Letters

IMAGINE™ magazine invites its readers to write on any subject that might be of interest to other adventure gamers. Correspondence should be addressed to IMAGINE magazine (Letters), The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD. Letters appearing in this column are edited for length.

John A English, Bristol: Why do you print micro computer, book and film reviews? Surely these topics are covered by other magazines. I would also prefer to see the end of fiction in IMAGINE magazine; okay, perhaps it is inspirational, but it takes up room which could be filled by articles of a more direct nature.

I'm in favour of a lot more articles on the AD&D™ game, but don't just listen to me, why not have a questionnaire asking people what sort of game balance they'd like to see?

Maybe we will, although experience tells me that the response is not always worth the effort. Would readers be interested? Should we print a questionnaire to find out?

Nick Payne, Nottingham: I found it strange that Dave Pringle's 'Book Review' should criticise **Sharra's Exile** for having 'little to do with science fiction' while praising Moorcock's **The Retreat From Liberty**, which, as he says, is a political pamphlet.

It occurred to me that it might be useful for Dave to write an article aimed at those readers new to SF & Fantasy. Everyone has heard of Asimov and Tolkien, but what about Fritz Leiber, Piers Anthony, Jack Vance, Roger Zelzany and all the other great writers?

James Manktelow, Bramley, Surrey: You should think seriously about your reviews of such events as **Sol III**, which are really too far removed from the hobby to be relevant. Your reviews of SF & Fantasy books are just close enough to be of interest; though your computer section is a waste of space. Articles written in an RPG magazine cannot hope to cover the field in enough depth to be useful.

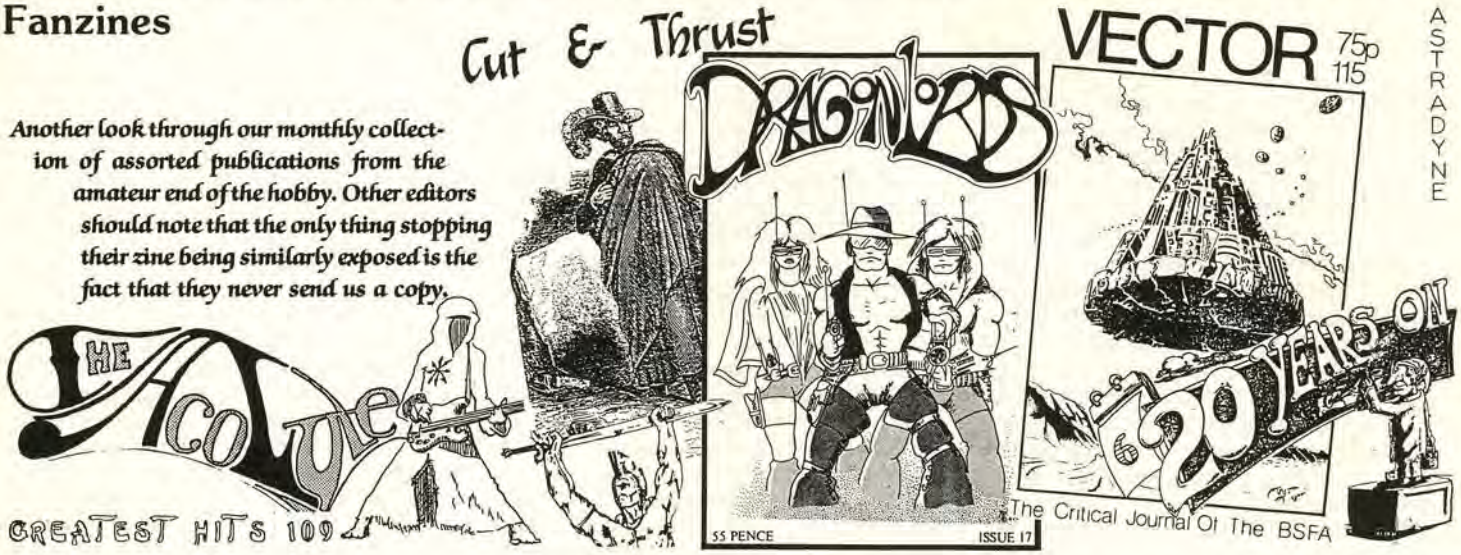
I enjoyed 'The Philosopher's Stone' in issue 4, which was worth £1 alone. I found issue 5's emphasis on Celts and druids very good; I derived a lot of inspiration from them. The concentration of four pieces on a subject allowed it to be covered in tremendous depth.

Lee Owers, Chairman Sol III '83, Luton: I would like to thank you for the witty and informative convention report which appeared in your August issue.

Being an SF/Trek enthusiast of long standing, and a keen RP gamer of some four years, I heartily agree that inside most SF fans there lies a potential gamer. It was for this reason that at **Sol III** we set

letters....letters....letters....

Fanzines



Another look through our monthly collection of assorted publications from the amateur end of the hobby. Other editors should note that the only thing stopping their zine being similarly exposed is the fact that they never send us a copy.

Chimaera 102 marks the end of an era. Clive Booth has decided to call it a day and has transferred his games to **Boojam**, a new zine to be run by Richard Morris, 1 Highland Ville, Lightcliffe, Halifax, W Yorks, HX5 8AC. Everyone here at IMAGINE™ magazine and TSR UK Ltd wish Clive all the best for the future.

And what do we get in its place? **Oink 1&2**. This offering came from Dave Messenger, 3 The Leasow, Aldridge, Walsall, W Midlands WS9 0EF, who declared himself independent from **Pole-axed Patriarchs**. Dave supplied them with a brief note, which was designed to show how tough he is for a 16 year old. I'm afraid the zine gets like that too.

Cut & Thrust 15 is our first glimpse of a good En Garde zine by Derek Wilson (321 Headley Road East, Woodley, Reading, Berks RG5 4SE) and Glyn Roberts. The coverage of the latest goings-on in this game is superb. Recommended.

John Dodds (Moberley Towers, Burlington Street, Manchester 15) and Bart Huby were responsible for **Perspiring Dreams 33** & **34**. Good support for United and Diplomacy players and just £1 for three issues. The letters pages are spicing up too. Another enjoyable read.

Richard Walkerdine (144 Stoughton Rd, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PG) seems to be one of those who surrounds himself with less-than-keen admirers. **Mad Policy 86** has a healthy debate in the letter column about the Zine Poll; Richard suffers from the brand of hobby dictator. Still, his Diplomacy games get good coverage.

Psychopath 8, with El Nabisco and En Garde, is available from Mike Dean, Rm 37, Culduthel Hospital, Inverness. I notice that his entire El Nabisco gang has been wiped out. This, presumably, was to convince us of the impartiality of his GM.

In **Hopscotch 33** Alan Parr (6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts HP23 4DN) has added still more games to his impressive list — 221B Baker St, Out for the Count and a cricket game. There is no better starting point for someone who wants to look into postal gaming.

Another first viewing: **The Journal of the Senseless Carnage Society** is a new F/SF gaming zine from Simon Hartley, 5 Burgh Heath Road, Epsom, Surrey. It is to appear four times a year and promises scenarios, new monsters and other RPG paraphernalia.

Greatest Hits 109 justified its existence with another thrilling letters section (15 pages!) including a truly incisive missive from some journalist chappie who works for **I'M A GENI**. Pete and I might not agree on sex 'n' violence in professional magazines, but he gets my vote on how to run a lettercol. Rock, politics, philosophy and IMAGINE magazine — the full spectrum of human endeavour....

....except for football. **Astradyne 61** fills the gap there, with cricketboss as well. I know some zine editors hate it when I go on about how a zine looks (instead of concentrating solely on the games or content), but this zine manages to show that care has been taken in the presentation. Ian Lee, 49 Fleet Ave, Upminster, Essex RM14 1PZ, wields a fine tube of cow gum.

The cover of **NMR 41** from our own Brian Creese (256 Canbury Park Rd, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT2 6LG) endeared this issue to our typesetting genius, Ms Daniel. He isn't flavour of the month with some of his colleagues, either, for signing up with us. Letters, chat and Diplomacy — and the Rusty Bolt awards.

Yet another new arrival is **Corrosive Comix Un-Ltd 1** from Marc Lamming, 75 Briars Lane, Hatfield, Herts. This is a mixture of comic strips and fantasy gaming for 50p, and will appear every four weeks. It's not a bad effort either, though very 'young' in style. Good luck to Marc and his mates.

Wargame News 7 and **The War Machine 20** maintained their high standards of news and reviews. WM keeps micro-gamers informed of worthwhile games on a wide variety of machines. WN maintains a similar service for board wargames. Mike Costello (who writes our own **Imagination Machine**) 17 Langbank Ave, Rise Park, Notts NG5 5BU is the contact.

SEWARS 13 from Chris Baylis (12 The Fryth, Basildon, Essex) makes a little mention of the hostile reception this zine gets from other editors. Chris usually doesn't join in. In fact, SEWARS, aided by Chris's undoubted energy, is a successful RPG zine, at least in terms of sales, so it must be pleasing somebody! The AD&D game gets lots of input here.

Dragonlords 17 couldn't show a greater contrast. The AD&D game is not this zine's favourite, and it is prepared to be hostile about *anything*. Good art, lots of features (including one on Torture that we rejected....) and if you understand all of it, drop Mike Lewis (Avalon, Grams Rd, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7PU) a line and he'll try harder next time.

So much stuff arrived from the **BSFA** that a list would fill up this space. Subscriptions (£7 pa) from Sally Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire G72 9NA. They didn't like IMAGINE magazine's art in **Matrix 48**, but then its cover was the worst garbage I've seen. They have a lot to offer, but this isn't worth the postage.

Walamalaysia Gazette 33 keeps its Diplomacy players up to date, but offers little else. You can get it from Dave Thorby, 200 Lavender Hill, Enfield, Middx EN2 8NJ.

Lastly, **Acolyte 49**. More of the best from Pete Tamlyn (new address 2 Poplar Road, The Coppice, Aylesbury). Everyone here hopes he and Kat are over the shock of the Wedding of the Year, and that issue 50 turns out even better than usual!

Paul Cockburn

Clubs

Clive Bailey and Joe Dever of Games Workshop are starting up a new games club which is to meet in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC2, on at least two Saturdays in each month, from 10am to 5pm. Dates to hand are October 8th and 15th, and November 12th and 19th. There will be an AD&D game mini-tournament, fantasy and SF tabletop battles, a Runequest Tavern Tussle, a **Traveller** game and much more. Details from Joe at London Games Club, c/o 27/29 Sunbeam Road, LONDON NW10 6JP.

In **Oxfordshire** they've got an even greater attraction. Steve Chicken, of the Carteron Wargames Club, tells me they play all RPGs and wargames every Sunday, from 2pm onwards in the Brize Norton Community Centre, Carteron, near Witney. I understand that there is parking space available for those who arrive by plane at a nearby airstrip (mind the Phantoms). Steve, on Carteron 843729, can confirm if I got this last bit right.

Finally, details of a club for players of the AD&D game in Hockley, Essex. It meets on Monday and Tuesday nights, from 7pm to 10pm, at the Hockley Youth Centre. Membership is free. Contact Rick Auger, 11 Foxfield Close, Hockley.

Events

The 35th British Easter Science Fiction Convention (**Seacon '84**) will take place 20th-23rd April 1984 at the Metropole Hotel, Brighton, and promises to be the biggest SF con this decade. 1500-2000 people are expected! Guests are to include, Philip José Farmer, Christopher Priest, Brian Aldiss, Bob Shaw, John Brunner, Harry Harrison, Frederick Pohl and Pierre Barbet. Book before November 30th and the price is just £7. More details will follow in this space, but meantime you can contact Pauline Morgan, 321 Sarehole Road, Hall Green, BIRMINGHAM, B28 0AL for details.

Fantasycon VIII is expecting Gene Wolfe to attend the Imperial Hotel, Birmingham, over 14th-16th October, as part of the **Venture Into Science Fiction** promotion of 20 SF books including Wolfe's latest, **Citadel of the Autarch** which is to be released then.

Just to confirm what we hope was evident last issue, **Dragcon** has been cancelled. We apologise for our rather crude warning last issue, but we did find out rather late.

Games Day '83, Northern Militaire, Tameside Science Fiction Modelling Society's show and **Novacon 13** are all

on the weekend of 5th-6th November. Details of all these events appeared last issue.

If you have the stamina, you could spend the weekend 11th-13th November at **Midcon '83**, back in the Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. This is the host event for the National Diplomacy Championship, and details can be obtained from Chris Tringham, 204 Beulah Hill, LONDON SE19 3UX.

Lastly, the land of our fathers hosts **Cymrucon III** in Cardiff, November 26th-27th November. Guest of Honour is John Brunner. It will cost £8 to attend, and details can be obtained from The Bower, High Street, Llanwit Major, S Glamorgan.

....next issue....next issue....next issue....next issue....next issue....

Next issue

★ **The long-awaited Cantrips:** 0-level spells for apprentice magic-users by Gary Gygax.

★ **The Sorceror's Apprentice;** life before experience points.

★ **Green Shadows,** sinister fiction by Alan Burt Akers.

plus

our film page, Chain Mail, letters, fanzines, PAN, Stirge Corner and a complete, intermediate level scenario:

GUARDIAN OF THE KEY TO TIME

CRASIMOFF'S WORLD

POSTAL GAME

Crasimoff's World is a fantasy game of exploration and adventure. As a player you assume the role of chieftain in a band of brave adventurers set on gaining knowledge and power. You must create a party of nine fellow travellers, from three character classes (fighter, mage and priest) to assist your chieftain.

Your party will set out from a small town, knowing nothing about the world apart from a few rumours. As you travel you will learn more about the land and its secrets, encountering other parties, races and creatures. There are tokens detailing magic items, spells, creatures, gods, money and many more things that you will discover later in the game.

'KJC Games has been running Crasimoff's World for over a year now, and the effort the gamesmaster puts into each turn never ceases to amaze me. Most players find themselves offered a different scenario each turn, or find that a new twist has happened to an existing adventure.'

as reviewed in

WHITE DWARF Nº37

If you wish to enrol in Crasimoff's world send a £5 cheque/P.O. payable to K.J.C. Games. For this you will receive a rulebook, set up material, and the first four rounds. Future rounds are £1.25 each. Copies of the White Dwarf review are available free of charge from K.J.C. Games.

Send to: K.J.C. Games, 5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, LANCASHIRE FY5 2BD.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Rules Set 1

It is tempting for the manufacturer of a highly successful product to keep on bringing out new 'improved' versions to generate extra sales. It happens all the time with cameras, hi-fi and the like. Let's face it, if Henry Ford had not followed such a course, we would all still be driving round in model Ts — and black ones at that. It is predictable that some will seek to impute such commercially minded motives to TSR to explain the release of another revision of Basic Rules.

However, even a cursory glance will dispel such unworthy thoughts. The game system is essentially unaltered, so owners of the old version can relax — their set is not made redundant. What *is* different is the presentation of the rules. At long last, the producers of a role-playing game have really thought about what it is like to be a new player, someone without the first idea of what an RPG is like or, still less, how to play one. One of the commonest remarks I have heard from first time purchasers of these games is 'Yes, I've read the rules and more less understand them but how on earth do you actually *start* a game?' This fundamental but hitherto largely ignored problem has at last been addressed and resolved in the latest version of the D&D® game.

Before going into more detail, let us quickly examine the set's components. It is in a similarly sized box to the previous edition, but the cover art, along with the illustrations throughout the rules, is vastly improved (not before time). Inside the box, there is a set of the dreadful TSR dice and two booklets: a 63-page 'Players Manual' and a 50-page 'Dungeon Masters Rulebook' (in both cases the apostrophe is mysteriously omitted).

The Players Manual is clearly headed *READ THIS BOOK FIRST!* Little room for doubt there so, obediently, one opens it up and finds a page or so of standard introductory chat about RPGs. This is hardly different from the previous edition. What comes next *is*, however. Instead of plunging into the complexities of Character Generation, a solo adventure is provided that the reader can take part in immediately, without any preparation. Within five minutes of opening the box, the player is actually playing. This is an excellent idea and sets the tone for the rest of the Players Manual.

This book is designed to allow a person to learn the Basic game *through playing it* and to do so *solo*. The rules are learned step by step rather than all at once, making the initial playing of the game so much more congenial. Anyone who has progressed through the PM will have experienced two solo adventures and some Town business. They will have learnt about character classes, combat, alignment, weapons, equipment etc.

Next they can try their hand at the Dungeon Masters Rulebook, if they fancy running a game with others as players. In this volume they will find details on monsters, treasure, creating dungeons, the procedures used in running games and a complete introductory scenario which has a little outdoor adventuring followed by the exploration of a castle. There is no separate module in this set, unlike its predecessor, but the adventure provided in the book is more than adequate to start a new party in and it is intended to be expanded by the DM. My play-testers were a group of very experienced role players and even they found the search of the castle entertaining.

The major differences between the new Basic and previous editions are all in the explanatory material, and they are without exception improvements. The actual game system is hardly changed at all so if you did not like the old rules (as opposed to the way they were presented) you will not like these.

Everyone has their favourite moans about the D&D game, most of which seem to be against the combat system. I can accept the system, with all its lack of realism, because I think it is right for the game. However, I would have liked to see provision for modifiers to the To Hit score, based on the effectiveness of each weapon type against different armour. This is not terribly complicated and it could have been included as an option. It would certainly have made the choice of weapons by the player more interesting and exciting. Rules are provided for different weapons to do varying amounts of damage, so why is their particular hitting effectiveness not included? A rule which could usefully be borrowed from the AD&D game is that which states that a character on zero hit points is not dead but unconscious. First level characters are reduced to zero all too easily and beginning players can lose interest in a game which kills off their laboriously created characters in short order.

It is possible that such refinements will come in the other sets which will eventually make up the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. Following on from the Basic is the Expert which takes characters to 14th level. After that will come the Companion (15th to 25th levels) and finally the Masters which will go to 36th level.

For the moment, however, there is just the Basic Set and it must be said that there are one or two minor mistakes in the rules which are annoying since the fact that they escaped attention is at variance with the very thoughtful and professional presentation of the rules. These errors are little niggles such as mistakes in the index; instructions to turn a page when in fact one merely proceeds to the next paragraph; small (but important) differences in the Combat Sequence as given in the PM (page 36) and the DMR (page 3); and confusion over how much can be done in a round (the Combat Round Checklist suggests a character can move and shoot in the same round whereas on page 5 of the DMR the DM is instructed to tell players that they cannot shoot because they have moved).

None of these little irritants should hide the fact that this edition of the Basic Rules is a major improvement. As an introduction to role-playing it is head and shoulders above any other system.

There is also plenty here for those who have gone on to greater things such as Advanced or Runequest. I found that reading the rules and then running playtest adventures, took me back to the excitement of those early days of playing the game in the mid '70s. It seems to me that Basic is a lot closer to the spirit of the original game than is the rambling, unwieldy and sometimes pompous Advanced. For one-off dungeon type games I would recommend Basic to anyone beginner and veteran alike.

One thing I found rather strange. On page 52 of the PM it says 'Your character may have a normal name like Gary' — natural — 'or Candace....' Candace? Normal? Are they joking?

Doug Cowie

The new Basic Set is available from good hobby and game shops or from TSR, and costs £8.95.

Distributors' names are given for information only.

TITAN

The main limitation of fantasy boardgames, in my experience, has always been the lack of any sense of the fantastic. The mapboard consists of a forest, a few hills, a sea, and a city, with invented names and wholly expected effects upon movement and combat; the whole exercise is just a wargame in different clothing. Avalon Hill's own recent release **Dragonhunt**, reviewed in #6, suffered from this fault and there have been plenty of others.

Titan, on the other hand, makes a considerable effort to be different. The mapboard shows 96 triangles of varying terrain types, about which the forces of the players patrol. Movement is very limited; most spaces allow a variety of routes only if they are the starting point for a move. It is as if the force begins the round able to perceive all the exits from the area, but as they travel through further areas, their perceptions are limited. Certain spaces offer only one route from the beginning of the move. This neat abstraction is easy to get the hang of, and provides a challenge for players attempting to hunt down an opponent.

This is a wargame, and the aim of each player is the elimination of the others, although the points system does make it possible for the last survivor not to be the winner. The 'armies' are collections of mythical and natural beings, from Ogres and Centaurs, through Gorgons and Warbears, to Hydras and Colossii. As each legion, individualised by a separate marker and with its components concealed, moves about the board, it may recruit new creatures, limited by the terrain type, to increase numbers and quality. Legions may be split, and more creatures recruited. The balance between having lots of smaller legions with individually smaller, but collectively greater chances of recruiting, and having fewer, stronger legions with greater power in combat needs to be carefully weighed.

Combat occurs when two legions occupy the same terrain. In the end, only one may continue to do so; a player may bargain or surrender to reduce the points gain to the opposition, but one legion must be eliminated. If battle is fought, play transfers to one of the Battlelands, eleven small, hexed areas, each representing one of the terrain types on the main board. Terrain effects are important, doubly so since some creatures can ignore or draw greater benefit from different terrain types. Battles are quite short, with the stronger Legion rarely overcome; the combat system is designed to speed play along, not to simulate a Wyvern and a Giant actually in conflict.

So, in the end, you have an abstracted wargame, attractively packaged, in which the pieces do represent something, just as in chess, but where this has no importance to the playing of the game, just to its *feel*. And **Titan** has a very good feel to it indeed. It is the best boardgame I have come across for a while.

Paul Cockburn

***Titan**, a boxed fantasy wargame, with Masterboard, Battlelands, 621 chits, 4d6 and rulebook, is published in the USA by Avalon Hill. Available at all good hobby shops, details can also be obtained from Avalon Hill, 650 High Road, N. Finchley, LONDON N12. It costs £11.95*

ASGARD MINIATURES

When Asgard began producing figures they were nothing special — adequate might have been a better term. Their products were, for the most part, cleanly cast and well designed, but the sculpting tended to let things down a bit. They weren't bad figures or unoriginal (I think that it was Asgard who first put backpacks and other appropriate equipment on adventurer figures), they just lacked, for want of a better term, 'Oomph'.

Things have changed at Asgard Miniatures. The latest samples that we have received definitely show a vast improvement in quality in all areas of production.

The new figures are all orcs, a small part of a new range. Physically, the new figures are attractively designed, well sculpted, and very cleanly cast, as you would expect with pre-production samples; but if the production models can be kept as clean as this, Asgard are onto a winner. The level of detail achieved is remarkable, and rivals that found on *Ral Partha* castings.

This detail reproduction has been used to good effect. All the figures show that considerable thought and, most importantly, imagination, has gone into the design. All the orcs are thoroughly disreputable in appearance: bow-legged, befanged, snarling, squint-eyed and their knuckles dragging on the ground, they are not creatures you would want to meet down a well-lit alley, let alone a dark one.

The care and attention to detail applies equally to the way that they are dressed. Gone are the ranks of identically dressed and equipped sword-fodder that we have been presented with in the past: these orcs are individualists. So far, I have not been able to spot two of these figures that are dressed in the same way. They seem to have been given whatever armour and equipment was left over after everybody else had had a choice! This, if anything, only makes them seem more realistic. With the addition of a couple of feathers, these figures would look like a cross between North American Plains Indians and the remnants of the Golden Horde.

Included in the samples was one that let the rest down a bit, a lancer on a wolf. In any other group of castings it would have been good, but in this company it was not as good as it could have been.

These figures are not easy to paint. They cry out for a comprehensive paint job that will bring out all the detail that has been lavished upon them. There they stand, all snarls and warpaint. When do we get some good guys of the same standard?

Mike Brunton

This range will eventually consist of 40 different figures ranging in price from 30p to 80p. If it is not available at your local hobby shop, contact Asgard at 36 High Pavement, Nottingham NG1 1MN.

These games are available from hobby shops.

GAMMA WORLD

Immediately noticeable is the splendidly vivid, colourful design of the box which is both thought-provoking and graphically visual in relation to the game contained within.

The actual game contents have been vastly improved from the original 1978 version, with brightly coloured maps — three instead of just one; more informative Rules Booklets — two; and a playing system that is almost immediately playable by experienced and new gamers alike.

One of the most drawn-out and confusing areas of role-playing games is character creation, with it sometimes taking an hour for new players to have the beginnings of an understanding of what they are doing, why they are doing it, and exactly what the numerous dice results have conceived. Here TSR have certainly done their homework, because the system has been altered to allow the creation of all types of interesting characters, with exciting qualities (mutations) in the quickest possible time.

I could list a great number of progressive differences since the original Gamma World was first marketed, but that could only serve to make you discard your earlier purchase for this 1983 model — actually not a bad idea — however I believe that certain points should be raised both for and against this revision.

The maps are interesting to observe and on strong paper, but unfortunately many of the significant areas (eg Grover Village, on the Area Map of Allegheny, and areas I and L on the map of Pitz Burke) are very difficult to locate for the first time. The two Rules (one marked as Rules, the other as Adventure) booklets cover all aspects of the game in strong detail with each section fully clarified. The notes on encounters are far more concise, with good artwork to enable the GM (Games Master) to keep his or her players clearly informed, and all charts, tables and matrices are collected together for quick and easy reference, with thoughtful 'user descriptions' next to each one. Once GMs get used to referring to the tables in one book, and then reading the full descriptions in the other, this idea works far better than having these necessary items spread throughout one large rules book.

Movement and Combat, two bug-bears (if you will excuse the phrase) of many role-playing games, are written in understandable and believable terms, but I found that there wasn't enough detail concerning unarmed combat of any type, a fault common to most systems for games of this ilk.

Pure Strained Humans (which always conjures up the thought of people being put through a sieve of gigantic proportions) which were originally regarded as the weakest of the player-character types, have been 'upgraded' by the strengthening of their Constitution, Charisma, Intelligence and Hit Points — an attempt by the authors to get more players to be PSHs rather than mutants, I wonder?

Hit Points, a term most players are by now familiar with as a means of explaining the amount of life left in a character, are recouped at a rate that doesn't correspond to the speed, ferocity, possible damage and regularity of combat during any one adventure, and Monster/Encounter Hit Dice are ridiculously numerous, causing a large amount of time-wasting as the GM (who has rolled a random encounter) throws dozens — literally in some cases — of dice to determine the encountered's Hit Points, thus detracting from the generally quick and efficient rules of combat found within the pages of the well-written booklets.

During play, characters newly created depend quite heavily on finding and using many of the 'artifacts', described quite fully in most cases. Originally one die roll decided whether such a find was usable or broken, but now the player-character has to discover for himself exactly what he has found, and how it works. This gives for far better role-playing, making characters liable for the condition of found 'artifacts' after attempting to discover the correct way to use them.

A planned scenario is offered as an introduction into the GAMMA WORLD® game, and it is advisable that new players use it as it covers most aspects of the game's intentions, getting to a large town, sorting out the evil creatures therein or thereabouts, meeting and negotiating different mutations, life forms and problems, and finally rescuing long-lost comrades from more of the 'new worlds' creations. There are also 26 mapped areas available for the inventive GM to expand upon, either during the first scenario, or for future campaigns.

For a post nuclear holocaust role-playing game, GAMMA WORLD® game has just about all the right ingredients, in the correct proportions. It is a very good introduction into the fantasy world of role-playing, and should seriously rival all other RPGs.

Chris Baylis

The new, revised GAMMA WORLD® game is available from your local game and hobby shops, or from TSR at the Mill, and costs £8.50.

RULES? WHO NEEDS THEM?

Pete Tamlyn *attacks rule-playing techniques in gaming*

There have been different styles of playing RPGs for almost as long as there have been RPGs to play. This is all very well and good; diversity is healthy and one style should be as valid as any other. However, every once in a while someone whose view of role-playing is greatly different from my own says something which I feel requires a reply lest a single view comes to dominate attitudes. One such pronouncement appeared in # 3 of IMAGINE™ magazine, in which Noel Williams claimed that the AD&D™ game promotes better role-playing because of its comprehensive set of rules. I believe the philosophy that says the more thorough the rules, the better the role-playing, is wrong. This article presents an alternative view.

Before I go any further I had better make clear what I mean by role-playing. Here I concur happily with Noel when he says that role-playing means you feel less like you are playing a game and more like you are taking part in a fantasy novel. Well, perhaps *novel* is not quite the right word. I more usually describe it as improvised, free-form theatre. The GM, as scriptwriter and director, provides the outline of the plot; and the players, as actors, add their own characters and take it from there. The sort of buzz-words I would look for to identify someone who is really interested in role-playing are *atmosphere* and (for people who have read **all** the right articles) *suspension of disbelief*.

My disagreement with Noel rests on three points. Two are specific to the AD&D game, namely that it is too comprehensive and that its rules are presented as overt attempts to force role-playing rather than covert attempts to encourage it. The third point is more general in that I believe large volumes of published rules actively encourage *rule*-play as opposed to role-play.

Let us elaborate these points. I believe that the AD&D game is too comprehensive. By this I mean that so many different cultures and mythologies have gone into its vast melting pot that any campaign using the whole spectrum of published material is almost impossible to make believable. The tactic of continually introducing new monsters to keep players interested rather than doing imaginative things with what you have is partly to blame for this and is symptomatic of GMs who are incapable of sustaining atmosphere. While attempting to produce a general set of rules is certainly a laudable objective, it is my opinion that the game design should reflect a culture in which the adventures are set. Careful selection from the range of Advanced material can still produce a good, culture-specific game, but in practice this tends not to happen; people are discouraged from messing with the rules.

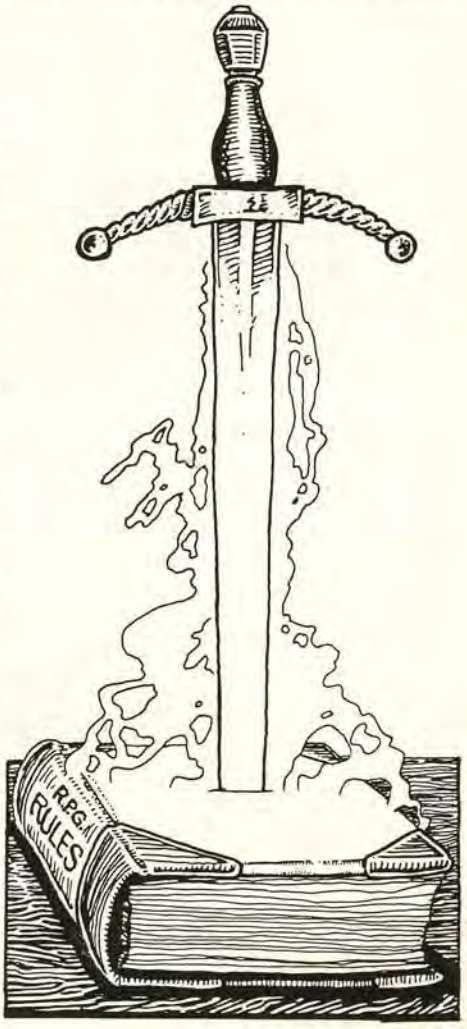
A more serious problem is the somewhat heavy-handed manner in which the AD&D game tries to encourage role-playing. Such mechanisms as character classes and alignment are often quoted as means by which players are persuaded to develop well-defined, believable characters in contrast to the bland, uniform supermen that can arise in, say, **Runequest**, where such mechanisms are absent. This is all very well, but in doing so the rules impose many artificial restrictions which can serve only to destroy the atmosphere of the game. A good maxim for those designing role-playing games might well be "Never say 'Thou shalt not' ". A GM can get away with saying 'you're unlikely to succeed' or 'well, you can, but you might get thrown out of your Guild/Temple if you do'; but nothing is quite as certain to destroy the atmosphere of a game as saying 'sorry, it's against the rules'.

What is wanted here is a covert approach. Players need to be encouraged to role-play by subtle means, not to be pushed into it by rule restrictions. A good example of the sort of thing I mean is provided by character classes. I gave up using them years ago, and yet players in my game have not become the sneaky, spell-casting fighter/clerics that advocates of character classes say they must. Far from it, the bulk of them are still instantly recognisable as the same character classes that I got out of the original D&D® game books. Why? Because I have a class-based experience system. The players have never seen it, but they soon find out that those who specialise in one area progress well, whereas the Jack of All Trades is usually master of none.

More specialist character classes are produced by the nature of the world. An MU becomes an illusionist, not because of the restraints of the class, but because, having started out on that path, it is much easier to learn more of the same type of spell than to diversify. A cleric becomes a healer because that sort of miracle comes far more easily to a priest of the god of medicine than to those favoured by the god of war. You may argue that this largely window-dressing, but that is exactly the point. The object is that players should gravitate naturally into the various roles because of the way the game system is balanced, not because they are told to do so.

Now it follows from the above that, as players will be constrained through perceiving the results of their actions rather than by the actual rules, they will not really know what the rules are. They can guess at what the built-in constraints might be, but the only possible reason for wanting to know what the probabilities are is so they can work out in advance what actions are best for their characters rather than finding out by trial and error. That is not role-playing as I understand it.

Now that does not mean to say it is not a valid approach to the game. A fair number of people, on being introduced to my game, have left in disgust because, for example, I would not tell them how many hit points an orc has. 'Where is the skill' they would say, 'if I can't work out my chances?' The more obnoxious of them tended to assume I was keeping the rules secret so as to cover up any GMing mistakes, which was not that far from the truth, because I firmly believe the GM's ruling should be made bearing the game situation in mind rather than by making a literal interpretation of the rulebook.



Rules Lawyers get short shrift from me, and one of the most encouraging things I have seen in IMAGINE™ magazine is the way so many writers have come out against rules-minded play.

It must be said that there are some very good reasons for having a standard set of rules. It means, for example, that you can go anywhere to join a game and immediately know what is required. You can have competitions. But the simple fact of the matter is that players will want to do well, and while most will refrain from open loophole hunting and cheating, everyone is going to be tempted to browse through the rulebook to see what is best for their characters, and therein are the seeds of rule-play sown.

A salutory lesson is provided by the experience of figure wargamers in this area. When I first started wargaming, writing your own rules was all the rage. Don Featherstone's books actively encouraged it and it was felt to be 'part of the hobby'. But as things got more organised on a national scale, people started looking for a generally accepted set of rules, so that competitions could be held. The Society of Ancients was one of the best organised national clubs and, thanks to them, the Wargames Research Group Ancients rules soon became a widely accepted standard. What was the result? Gamers all over the country started quibbling about rule interpretations, and knowledge of the rules became as important as good generalship. Since then there has been a reaction against this, but wargames magazines now often contain letters bemoaning the fact that the hobby is stagnating because nobody writes their own rules any more.

The AD&D game is going the same way, and if anyone does not believe me then they should get hold of DRAGON® magazine #70 and read Ken Rolston's article on tournament play. His recommendations include memorising large sections of the rulebooks and working out how to manipulate the GM to your advantage. This is all very well for Fantasy Rule Players, but it has nothing to do with the spirit of role-playing.

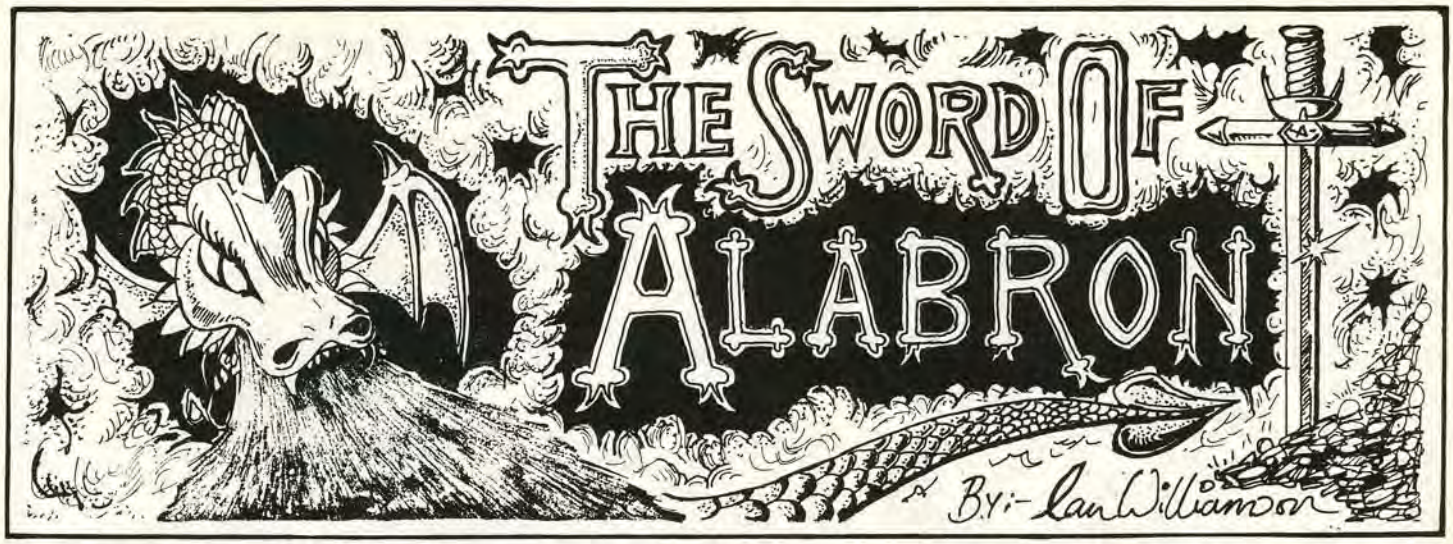
So there we have it. In my view, copious published rules, and especially rules designed to force role-playing, are actually detrimental to the role-playing approach. Please note that this is not a purely philosophical argument. I have been running RPGs for many years now and in my experience it is players of the AD&D game who are the most rules-minded people in the hobby. I had also better point out that I am not opposed to complex rules *per se*, only those rules which impinge on the players and thus destroy the atmosphere of the game and encourage rule-playing. It all comes down to what I said in the title. Who needs rules? The GM? Sure (though I know some GMs who can run good games without rules), but the players? No way!

This begs one fairly obvious question. If the players do not know any rules, how do they know how to play? Well, there are bound to be a few things that you have to tell them, such as what to do when combat arises; but for the most part a role-playing game is about playing out the life of a character in an imaginary world. Thus all the player really needs to know is how to live. Most of us can manage that fairly well, but the task can be made easier by the provision of background. Whatever sort of game you are running, be it a one-off scenario or a grand-scale campaign, the players will role-play better if they are given a good idea of the sort of world in which their characters live. That, to my mind, is far more important than any set of rules.

In conclusion, I'd like to outline briefly what I think TSR can do to promote role-playing among its customers. Obviously there is no point in asking for the game to be re-written, for there are many people who like it the way it is and beginners who will need things doing for them. However, the points raised here could be borne in mind in designing future games (the STARFRONTIERS™ game is quite encouraging in this respect) and there are other things that can be done without resorting to such drastic methods. I read recently that Lee Gold is working on a new game which will comprise a central core of rules and a series of 'culture packs' with which the game can be tailored to a specific culture. There is no reason why the same could not be done for the AD&D game — indeed the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ gazetteer is a very similar idea. Magazine articles are also very important in creating ideas of 'approved' styles of play. New players coming into the hobby will tend to look to commercial rules to begin with, and they need to be shown that they don't have to stick rigidly to them forever. If IMAGINE magazine were to carry material on how to encourage role-playing rather than printing new rules additions then I would be very pleased indeed.

Pete Tamlyn

What do you think? Why not write to the letters page and let us know your opinion.


THE SWORD OF ALABRON
BY:- Ian Williamson

AUCHTER IS LOST, AFTER FALLING INTO THE SEEMINGLY "ETERNAL ABYSS", ALONG WITH THE LEADER OF THE ORC PATROL...
IN A FIT OF UNCONTROLLED PASSION... REG'S EYES BURN...
..WITH AN ALMOST ELVISH DESIRE FOR REVENGE!
EITHER THAT OR HE'S OVER-ACTING AGAIN.

AND...
OH DEAR..
..HERE WE GO!
CHARGE! FOR AUCHTER!.. MY LORD!.. AND HONOUR... AND VALOUR... (and perhaps just a "teeny-weeny" bit of SELF GLORY!)
BOUND

..AND A FEW ORC BLADES IN THE GUT, NO DOUBT!
WHAT AM I DOING? I MUST BE MAD COMING DOWN HERE WITH A BERSERK SCOTTISH DWARF...
AND A...WELL? TOTALLY FANATICAL "LANCELOT" LOOKALIKE!?

WELL TO BE HONEST, DEXYS, I'D HAVE THOUGHT YOU HAVE TO BE MAD TO BE...
...A THIEF IN THE FIRST PLACE!
I DONT THINK I KNOW ANY WHO HAVE REACHED 5TH LEVEL!
CLASH!
"IVOR. J. IVOR" WAS ELECTROCUTED. "FRUD" HAD HIS HEAD LOPPED OFF BY A BARD. "SLYBLADE" WAS CRUSHED OR DID HE DIE SCREAMING IN A VAT OF ACID?
..ER, YEAH, ALRIGHT.. ..DONT RUB IT IN! IT BEATS BEGGING IN SLUDGETHORPE AT ANY RATE... (I think)

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.. I MEAN TAKE REG, HE LOVES "ADVENTURING" REALLY..!
DIE FOUL GOBLINS..
..THINE "MAKER" AWAITS THEE!
KILL THE PRETTYBOY!
BIT MELODRAMATIC ISN'T HE? ITS ONLY A SCRAP AFTER ALL..
OH.. I SEE ITS A PALADIN
KYNN
NAK
SLAY THE SILVERTONGUE
REG... ITS TIME TO FLEE! WEVE FAILED, OUR QUEST IS LOST!
HAVE FAITH NIGHTSWIFT! MY HEART IS PROUD (also mine armour class is pretty good!)
GREAT! HALF THE ORC ARMY ON ONE SIDE... AND AN ANCIENT "RED DRAGON" ON THE OTHER!
WHY NOT? ISNT THAT ALL THIEVES CAN DO?
MIND IF I JUST.. "ROT IN THE SHADOWS?"
NO, WE CAN RUN PRETTY FAST TOO. (WHEN THERE'S SOMEWHERE TO RUN!) NO HARD FEELINGS, BUT YOU ARE THE WIZARD...
METHINKS... PERHAPS MINE END IS CONCEIV -ABLY NIGH!
FAREWELL WORLD.. FAREWELL LIFE...!
(BYE BYE EVERY -BODY...
..AND FAREWELL MINE WARHORSE "JERUSALEM"
.. SO "THROW A FEATHER" OR SOMETHING! IT MIGHT EVEN WORK
"KRELLS MIRACLE WORKERS!" WHO DOES HE THINK I AM.. MERLIN?!
OH NO- REG HAS FALLEN..
IRONICALLY OVER HIS OWN SWORD!
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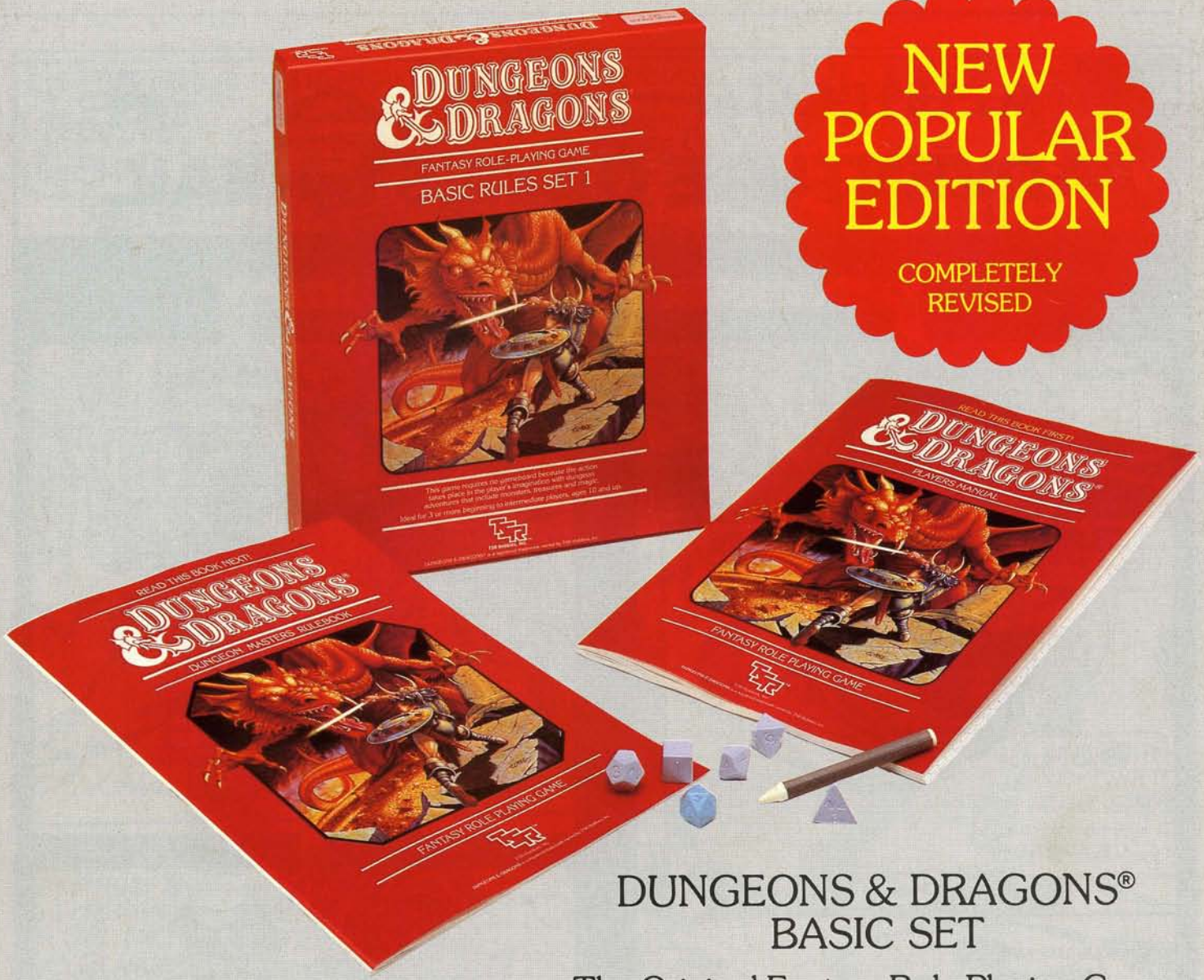

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